





LIBRARY  
OF THE  
UNIVERSITY  
OF ILLINOIS

823

C 8393c

v. 3











**THE CAMISARD.**



THE  
CAMISARD;  
OR, THE  
PROTESTANTS OF LANGUEDOC:  
A Tale  
*IN THREE VOLUMES.*

---

VOL. III.

---

LONDON:  
PRINTED FOR GEO. B. WHITTAKER,  
AVE-MARIA LANE.

---

1825.

LONDON:  
PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES,  
Northumberland-court.

823

C 8393c

v. 3

THE  
CAMISARD;  
OR, THE  
PROTESTANTS OF LANGUEDOC.

---

CHAPTER I.

---

Tell me, Gustavus, tell me why is this,  
That, as a stream diverted from the banks  
Of smooth obedience, thou hast drawn those men  
Upon a dry unchannelled enterprise,  
To turn their inundation ?

*Gustavus Vasa.*

---

THE speed with which Isidore pursued his way from the prison of Nismes to the hermitage of Father Gabriel was as great, as the motives by which he was actuated were powerful. One of these was the natural delight at the recovery of liberty,

though it was not the strongest ; it seemed to him as if the lives and happiness of numbers of his fellow-men depended upon the velocity of his progress, and his eagerness to proceed was so great, that the poor mule, unable to enter into the motives of the exertions to which she was thus a second time called, was unequal to proceeding till the morning's dawn, and her rider, freeing her from the incumbrances of saddle and bridle, left her to return home as she could, and found himself obliged to perform the rest of his way on foot.

The intelligence which Isidore had received from the Pilgrim gave a degree of energy to his mind, and invigorated his spirits, so as greatly to lessen his fatigue. His thoughts were perpetually recurring to this new subject of wonder—his imagination forming more expanded views, and



his hopes rising with a buoyancy that sober judgment in vain endeavoured to control. If it was true, and to his ardent feelings it soon became impossible to doubt the correctness of the information, what a prospect of happiness was opening before him; cloud after cloud rolled away, each revealing some anticipated enjoyment on which he delighted to dwell. The unspeakable bliss of conferring happiness on one dearer far to him than all else the world contained—the certainty of not being again separated from her—the privilege of claiming relationship with the highly valued Madame Durand—the change he should effect in the future lot of his second mother—the protection he could afford the oppressed—the comfort his wealth would diffuse where unassuming misery was concealed, and where, hitherto, he had only been able to bestow his sym-

pathy,—and perhaps he may be pardoned for indulging also in the prospect of crushing the malevolent and the base ; these, and a thousand such day-dreams, occupied his thoughts in rapid succession, and though reason sometimes interfered and recommended a pause for consideration, there are always sufficient sophisms in a youthful mind to answer her remonstrances.

It appeared to Isidore, that the evidence which convinced him, would not fail to convince those on whose decision the cause must depend, forgetting that neither words nor proofs are authoritative farther than they obtain evidence, and that our wishes render us as credulous as our selfish apprehensions make us hard of belief. He forgot, too, that should his birth be allowed, a legal sanction of his parent's marriage might still be wanting, and that this plea for withholding his succession

would not fail to be insisted on by the Prior. Yet, even should his claims be set aside, there was a satisfaction in the very consciousness of possessing rights that were iniquitously withheld, of exercising those virtues of endurance and forbearance, which are the portion of great minds, and we are often happier when we suffer, than in the indolent enjoyment that calls upon us for no exertion.

Isidore was so well acquainted with the country through which his route lay, that he had not stopped during the darkest hours of the night ; as morning dawned, he began to feel that the body also requires support, and was not sorry to perceive the stir of humble life. Here and there a half-awakened cottager was proceeding unwillingly to his toil, chased by the vociferous tongue of his more alert helpmate ; the children, delighted at the

return to life and enjoyment, were jumping half-naked before their doors, and the shrill chaunt of the cock, which had aroused them from their slumbers, echoed amongst the hills. But there were no soft dews, no wreaths of white vapour encircling the heights, or stealing silently along the valleys: the sun rose bright in the cloudless blue sky, through which he was, till evening, to pursue his burning course. Aware of the hospitality of his countrymen, our young traveller had no hesitation in asking for such refreshments as he knew they could without difficulty afford, and again proceeding on his way, he soon entered upon that part of the range of the lower Cevennes to which his course was directed. Till now, he had reflected little on the strange, and perhaps hazardous employment he had undertaken; ignorant of the degree of influence

that Father Bernardine might possess over the rude class of men to whom his embassy was addressed, it was in vain for him to judge what success he could expect; he could only trust to the goodness of his cause, and to the power of simple truth and plain sense, which are often found more than a match for the most subtle arguments. However fruitless his reflections might be, they were at least uninterrupted; by degrees, the marks of man's dominion became less frequent; the way no longer traced out by the constant pressure of his footsteps was left to the wayward choice of the wanderer, and the face of the country more wild and unimproved, displayed a thousand beauties which cultivation vainly endeavours to imitate by its miniature skill. There is a freedom in the mountain breeze, a spirit-breathing charm in

the mountain echoes, a life in the mountain stream that the soul of man must feel, if not sunk in hopeless apathy, and Isidore was fully alive to their influence ; heedless of fatigue and heat, he ascended the steep elevation, till at length the distant roar of the torrent near the Hermit's cell, reached his ear with its low incessant thunder. Amidst the dashing of the water, he imagined he heard a voice in the solitude, and on looking from whence it could proceed, perceived on the summit of the rock round whose base he was climbing, the figure of a man, calling to him, and making signs that he should advance with rapidity. He was dressed as a peasant, but appeared to carry some weapon of defence, and not only to occupy the post, but to fulfil the duty of a vidette. Without reply, Isidore walked quickly forward, and on turning the rock, what a spectacle pre-



sented itself to his view ! The lofty precipices, the thick woods, and deep ravine, shaggy with immense blocks of granite, and even in the glare of noon-day half hid in gloom, the sparkling foam of the torrent and its Alpine bridge he had beheld before, but they were *then* desert and silent ; now they teemed with life and animation. Nô sooner had he appeared, than as if by some magical impulse, small parties of men sprang down the sides of the cliffs, or rushed from the shade of the spreading chestnuts. Regardless of danger, superior to fear, they burst out in a loud shrill cry of rejoicing, brandished their arms, and ran with impetuous ardour to the level ground which lay before the cave. Expectation seemed at its height ; in vain some, who assumed the authority of leaders, endeavoured to control them—all were anxious

to press forward with a din that increased by opposition. Isidore, doubtful whether to advance or retire, stood for some moments irresolute. Was this then the end of his journey? Was he thus to be inveigled into a dangerous co-operation, which honour and principle alike disapproved? Too late he perceived Father Bernardine's artifice, who hoped, by thus forcing him into the heat of the commotion, to prevent the wish as well as the possibility of retreat. But the Father knew not the spirit of him with whom he had to deal, and that it is as impossible for the cunning policy of the hypocrite to ensnare the really upright in heart, as for the weak ivy to master the firmly-rooted oak. Not a wavering thought lessened Isidore's presence of mind; he knew but one path to pursue, and however doubtful the result might be, he determined to fol-



low it. As he at length drew near, the confused and mingled cries united in a far re-echoed shout of—Long live our leader! Long live the avenger of our wrongs! We have waited but not in vain—long live our noble chief!—Isidore bowed to the warm salutation, but his heart was too full for speech. One moment the pride natural to man assailed him, but by a strong effort he drove it away, and turning to the Hermit, who stood at his right hand, begged he would request the men to be silent, as he wished to address a few words to them. The Hermit raised his hand, and the crowd stood mute; then, on receiving his orders, threw themselves on the ground or climbed to such points of the rock as were most easy of access. It was a sight to catch the poet's or the painter's eye; their sun-burnt faces turned towards him who was the object of

all their hopes, with an eagerness that bids defiance to description. Nor were the various attitudes and attire of the different groupes less worthy of attention. The peasants, in their usual dresses, were adorned with all that chance could furnish of military accoutrements. The old Flemish belt and huge powder-flask were thrown across a tattered gray doublet; the unwieldy boots, which might have disfigured the appearance of one of Louis the Fourteenth's dragoons, had replaced the more suitable sabot; some, notwithstanding the heat of the weather, had wrapped themselves in the red horse-cloaks of the last century, and shattered helmets, half-worn foraging caps, and hats shaded with dangling plumes, formed a strange contrast with the matted locks they covered. Nor were the arms which they unskilfully wielded less diversified in their forms.

Several, indeed, having been partially brightened for the occasion, glittered as their impatient owners flashed them idly in the sun with the wantonness of children, anxious to try their edge; others still showed evident marks of the underground concealment to which they had owed their safety during so many years of inaction, and now handled by the sons of those who had by their means driven oppression from their doors, like old and faithful servants, presented but the image of what they had once been, and a disciplined troop would have smiled with contempt at the effects of such weapons. In the foreground stood a few of more daring bold demeanour, with swaggering gait or commanding air, and whose accoutrements seemed selected with more care. Amongst these, Isidore recognised Manuel Lafuyade, whom he had already met

with at the same spot; the shepherd Pierre, displaying in the midst of this scene of excitement the calm, stern look, which always marked his demeanour, and others whom he had seen with Father Bernardine; but their appearance was no longer the same, and those vulgar faces, which on ordinary occasions would have been passed unheeded by, now displayed the importance which they deemed becoming their new calling. Not more conspicuous for his manly form, his intelligent countenance, and commanding air, than for the coolness with which he looked on all around, Isidore stood before them; and strongly contrasted was the appearance of the old Hermit, still clothed in his coarse gown and girt, with the cord of St. Francis, and eager from the agitation and exultation of such a moment: he looked on Isidore, then on the expecting

crowd, as if all delay was galling to his impatient spirit. In the deep furrows of his face could be traced many passions that were now to be called into action; self-sufficiency, unsubdued haughtiness, that strange contradiction, religious pride, which was not to be concealed by the affected humility of his demeanour. In him might be seen a specimen of a class of men, now become rare, whom the oppression of the government had once for a short time forced into consequence; whose uncharitableness, aided by a warm and heated imagination, led them to sanction excesses which the very name of Christians should have taught them to oppose, and who, proud of superiority, by whatever means obtained, would have shone as Inquisitors, had they lived under the rule of St. Dominic. Le Moin, this pretended Hermit, had

figured under the double pre-eminence of chief and prophet of the Camisard bands, and his name had excited as much reverence in the one party as terror in the other ; he had seldom indeed drawn the sword, and then only when compelled by the principle of self-defence, but it was the less frequently needed by one, at whose word were wielded the blades of fifty stout partisans glorying to shed their blood in his defence. Aware of his zeal and talents, Father Bernardine, having at length discovered his retreat, gave him the part to act which was the most suited to his character, and he had well performed it. Now that part was over, he had laid the train, but he deemed a secular arm more fit to fire it, and having concerted with Father Bernardine, that the moment of the discovery of the young Baron should also be that of its explosion, it



only remained for him by his exhortations to enflame still further the enthusiasm he had kindled.

In order to render this moment still more solemn, he took from the hands of a young man who stood behind him a sword of antique form and coarse workmanship, and holding it towards Isidore, "This sword," he exclaimed, which I now for the first time intrust to other hands, "was the sword of Roland! Prize it as such. Not of that Roland whose exploits, gilded by poetry and fable, intoxicate the hearts of the worldly, and rouse our youth to emulate him in a career of useless valour; but of him, the champion of a purer faith, the hero, the martyr, the defender of the poor against the rich, of the weak against the powerful, of the children of God against the queen of abominations. May his spirit revive in you, and may the

death he met with never be your lot till you have, like him, nobly achieved your task. Your means are greater, your cause as great: look around you on this handful of men, who are ready to hold their lives cheap at your bidding. Despise not their numbers, but ask them, and they will tell you, they are but as an ear of corn to the field that stands ready for the sickle. Many a year has my solitude been cheered by the expectation of this hour; I have spent my feeble strength in preparing the materials, and you will find my zeal has been prudent as well as warm. Let us now proceed to arrange the plan of attack; I claim but a voice in the deliberations, and that voice shall be to rush at once on the prey, without suffering delay to slacken the ardour of our friends, or increase the vigilance of our foes. You swear," he continued, turning



to the determined-looking peasants, "to abide by our counsels, and to submit to him who is appointed over you."

"We swear," they replied with enthusiasm.

"Stop, misguided men!" exclaimed Isidore; "stop, and hear me." There was a moment's silence, succeeded by a low murmur of wonder and inquiry. The Hermit dropped the point of the sword, which he still held in his hand, and looked at Isidore with astonishment not unmixed with anger, as if he wished, yet dared not check, so strange an interruption. "Would you pause at such a moment?" he at length said in a low voice, "consider the habitations of our victims are selected, the blood-red mark fixed, and should we now hesitate, certain ruin must fall upon us."

"And let the ruin come," replied Isi-

dore, "if come it must, but let us not seek it. It is not, my friends, a momentary pause I ask of you ; what it is right to do, it is right to do at once ; but I would, if possible, turn you from the destruction into which you are driving headlong, and open your eyes to a sense of your actual position before you lose the possibility of regaining it."

"This before me, rash boy !" exclaimed the Hermit, his countenance inflamed with rage.

"I would not willingly offend you," said Isidore, "but at such a time silence would be cowardice. You have, by your own confession, drawn these men into the snare ; save them from its consequences if you can, or join with me in freeing them from a delusion that must lead to guilt and punishment. Yes, brave companions ! I shall rejoice at having come amongst

you, if I can persuade you that your worst enemies are not those whom you have been taught to consider as such, but those who, by awakening your impatience, sharpen the sting of every evil of which you complain. Can you believe them when they promise you ease and liberty? Are they superior beings, that with a look they can reduce to nothing the forces that will be sent to oppose you? What will your wild enthusiasm avail against firm valour and discipline? Those by whom you are misled have roused you by I know not what ideas of your fathers' courage and prowess; but do you compare yourselves to them? Have you the same overpowering wrongs to drive you on? They were, like the hunted lion, who, finding no way of escape, prefers springing upon the encircling spears, to waiting a slower but as certain death. You have

friends, have families; have hopes and recollections of happiness, which you will fear to lose: the man who has one tie left to bind him to his native home is not yet wound up to that pitch of despair which can alone render such desperate measures efficacious."

"You doubt our constancy then," exclaimed a dark-looking old man, in a tone of mingled reproach and scorn.—"Ah!" cried another, tauntingly, "a coward is always prudent, and never stirs till the stick reaches his own back."

"Do you call me a coward," cried Isidore, stepping forward; and seizing the speaker, he dragged him, notwithstanding his struggles, from the midst of his companions. A short confusion ensued. "No, no," cried several voices at once, "we know you're a brave youth; we know you mean what is best, but it passes the

patience of man to put up any longer with what we are forced to bear, and so without you've better reasons to give, march at our head, instead of wasting time in talking to the winds." The blood, which had mantled to his cheeks, and the indignation which flashed in his eyes, gave to Isidore an air of impetuosity that pleased the multitude, but he was ashamed of the hasty irritation, and relaxing his grasp, suffered the peasant to return to his post, no ways sorry to escape from so powerful an arm. Hear me, however, for a few moments," he continued, "and let it be with impartiality, for you may see I have no view in opposing your will. I speak not to you now as a body, but I would ask each of you individually, is your life so wretched that you would sooner lay it down, than endure it for a few years longer?" They could not but

answer “no” to this question, though each alleged petty vexations and tyrannical control, from which he hoped to escape. “I grant,” replied Isidore, “that you have much to suffer, but consider also the chances of war: how few in such a contest, where quarter can neither be demanded nor given, ever escape. With you falls your share in the struggle: you are uncertain whether your spirit will kindle the ardour of others, and whether other victims will rush upon your footsteps and meet your doom; but you are certain that in that case those most dear to you, your wives, your children, your aged parents, must forfeit the share of comfort they at present enjoy, however small that may be. You lament with reason the want of temples in which to worship as your forefathers worshipped, but are you ignorant that the heart is the temple God demands?



That in the desert and the cave the purest incense may be offered to Him; He has not forbidden your adoring Him there; He has not confined his presence to those costly piles, where in pomp and splendour the formal professor may mock his fellow-creatures by a show of devotion, but cannot deceive his Creator. Be thankful that the ministers of your religion are still with you, and tempt not your monarch to leave you again to the false fervours of deceitful and ambitious guides." The crowd seemed attentive, but nothing can express the indignation of the Hermit, when he gathered from Isidore's speech, how far he was from serving as an instrument to their designs. Father Bernardine had, with a confidence arising from his habitual self-delusion, flattered himself that nothing was necessary but to place him in a situation to act,

without considering how widely different the young's man's views might be, from the visions he had so long cherished. These sanguine hopes he had communicated to all who possessed his confidence, and what they wished they readily believed. Regardless of his endeavours to stop him, and to turn the attention of his auditors to their former resolutions, Isidore proceeded: " To command success is not in the power of man, but to deserve success is the duty of all. Consider your circumstances ; what connexions have you abroad, what finances, what means of escape ? Should I accept your offer, and lead you to such certain destruction, I should not only be guilty of my own blood, but of all that would flow in consequence of my rashness and impetuosity. Brave men, reserve yourselves for a nobler occasion ; if you will follow me, let it be



to plunge into the midst of the ranks of the enemies of our country, and to drive invading nations from the bosom of our dear, our native land ; follow me there, while our despisers shall be forced to own we merit the privileges we ask, and shall be ready to exclaim, how much do we not owe to the forbearance of such a band ! Let us not inflict upon others the evils we shrink from ourselves, but acquire, during this season of depression, those solid and firm virtues which we may ere long have occasion to exhibit in a more glorious scene. But now, my brave friends, throw down your arms ; I will lead you to your homes, and there you shall promise never to desert those whom Heaven has committed to your charge, though you may have to struggle hard to defend them."

A loud and joyful shout was the only

reply. The men rose tumultuously, and crowding round Isidore, declared he was in the right, and endeavoured to take his outstretched hand, by a hearty shake to testify their acquiescence. In vain the Hermit threatened and caressed by turns ; in vain the more boisterous soldier endeavoured to stem the torrent of returning subordination. It is easier to lead men when they are blinded by ignorance, than to hoodwink them again when once the truth has shone upon their minds. The sword of Roland, formerly so sacred in their eyes, was now no more than a common weapon, and with the light versatility of their nation, they jested upon the very arguments which had before so powerfully aroused them. Their unaccustomed hands seemed not unwilling to part with their useless arms ; each, in careless pleasantries while despoiling himself, could not

avoid a joke upon his neighbour's appearance, and the greater the rage of their soi-disant chiefs, the louder rose their mirth. Isidore looked on with the triumph which arises from the success of efforts made in a good cause, and anxious not to leave his task unfinished, he resolved to remain there till each was withdrawn, and every sign of this wild commotion should be effaced. All was hurry and confusion in the motley scene, some had even already begun to depart, when one of the peasants suddenly exclaimed, "Hist! what noise is that?" and endeavoured to draw the attention of his companions. "Noise!" said another, on whose arm he had seized, "you have been dreaming of swords and fire-arms, till you fancy the bullets are whizzing past your ears."

"Nay," repeated the former speaker, "if I do not hear the tread of horses upon

the rock, ay, and drawing near us too, may I never draw a cork again."

"That would be a hard case, neighbour," said the other, "but to drive away these fancies of an empty stomach, I'll step up to our watch-post, as the captain calls it—I should have been a sharp looker out, for my eye seldom fails me." So saying, he carelessly sprung upon a small rock that commanded a view of the two paths by which the Hermitage was accessible: but scarcely had he time to exclaim, turning round to his friends, "they're coming," when a pistol shot was heard, and the poor fellow tumbling backwards from his eminence, fell a victim to his curiosity. "Who are coming?" eagerly demanded many. "What! just when I've put away from me that villainous musket which I thought every moment was going off in my hands?" ex-

claimed a poor pale-faced shoemaker, who had rejoiced in good earnest at the termination of his military career. "You may tell by their music," cried the first spokesman, "whoever they are, they're not likely to prove friendly visitors: however, I only wish they'd have thought proper to pay their visit while I was in a fighting mood, for I must say it's a taste that quickly leaves me when the necessity's past." "A pretty fellow indeed," exclaimed a third, "with your times and seasons of courage; there's no time for choosing now, see the Hermit has sneaked into his cell, to his beads, I suppose; the hypocrite! if I live I'll teach him to vapour and fume, and do nothing. Take your swords again, my good fellows, there's spirit caught by the very touch of *them*, and that's what some of you terribly want. Now we're ready, and here they

come, springing like so many wild goats, in places where an honest man's horse would be sure to make a false step, and send him some fathoms lower than he might wish."

While these remarks were rapidly passing amongst the crowd, and every face displayed the varied feelings that agitated them, a small troop of cavalry, whose approach had been thus announced, turned the projecting rock ; at their head was Vidal, and even the commanding officer appeared to yield to his authority. Irritated beyond all power of control by the death of their comrade, the sturdy peasants, late so peaceably inclined, ran to repossess themselves of the arms they had just thrown by. In vain Isidore remonstrated, they were deaf to his voice as the raging of the mountain stream : no leader was required to urge them on ;



but during this short bustle, the troop had time to pass the defile, where they might have been met with advantage. The soldiers instantly dismounted—the word of command was given, and with loud cries of “Vive le Roi et la Croix,” they flew to the combat. A well-aimed discharge began the work of blood, but it served also to rouse the fury of the attacked. Still more indignant at a proceeding, which, without any inquiry, without even an attempt at pacification, thus wantonly sported with their lives, they rushed forward with the rage of the wounded bear.

In so narrow a field of contention, much of the skill of military tactics was useless, personal valour was at first successful, man closed with man, the nervous mountaineer often succeeded in wresting from his adversary the arms he had not space

to wield. It was no vain trial of strength, no boyish exhibition of muscular prowess, life and death hung upon the contest : the sabres' flash was seen like gleams of lightning emerging from the smoke of the fire-arms, which once discharged, were thrown away as useless : the quick succeeding shots, together with the shouts of the victors, and the groans of the wounded, in dreadful confusion were repeated by the echoes of the hills, and augmented the horror of the scene. At the beginning of the affray, Isidore, though unarmed, had remained firm in the front of the combatants, endeavouring with a voice that might have arrested the most determined, to check the eagerness of one party, and convince the other of the precipitancy of the attack ; he even condescended to entreat Vidal himself to pause, but no sooner had the latter perceived him, than



with eyes flashing fire, he called on the troop to secure the ringleader, the instigator of the rebels, dead or alive, for a hundred crowns was to be the reward of their zeal. Instantly a stroke from a blunderbuss laid him senseless on the ground; the confusion increased around him; the kind-hearted peasants, on seeing him fall, recollected his earnest endeavours for their good, and though many were killed in his defence, the soldiers, unable to succeed in their endeavours to bear off his body, were forced to rest contented, with the hope that the blow had been his last, and that his death also would add to the triumph of their victory.

## CHAPTER II.

---

Lou fifre en li siblan un air,  
Metet touta la ville en l'air,  
Un que devistét l'escouade  
Cridet : "Juste ciel ! quinta armade  
Campa davan nostras paréts !  
Oh ! s'en couats aquesta fés."  
Aqui dessus tout s'esfrayét,  
Vite l'alarme se sonnet ;  
Et sans soungea de se deféindre,  
Parlavoun deja de se réndre.

*Lou Siège de Cadaroussa.*

---

NOTWITHSTANDING the courage and boldness of the mountaineers, they were forced to fly before their adversaries, leaving many of their number dead on the spot, from whence they had hoped to commence their triumphs, and some who experienced the more wretched fate of falling into the

hands of those from whom they could hope for no mercy. Amongst the latter, was the pretended Hermit, and Pierre, who was, equally with Isidore, the object of the Consul's vengeance. So greatly had the recollection of the scene which had taken place when last they met increased his natural fury, that nothing but a curiosity which he was determined by any means to gratify, and some remaining doubts respecting his parentage, prevented him from instantly sacrificing the indignant youth, who, furious in his bonds, could with difficulty be forced along with his conquerors. The prisoners were tied two and two, and committed to the care of those who had suffered the least in the fray. Having at length succeeded in catching their horses, which, left at large, and terrified by the confusion, had strayed in every direction; the trumpet sounded

to horse, and the whole party set out by a different route from that by which they had penetrated into this recess.

It seemed probable that some of the fugitives might yet be found lurking in the cottages and farms which were nearest the woods ; to seize on these, and to chastise such as had afforded them shelter, were important objects ; and perhaps in the opinion of Vidal, all unused to the fatigues and hazards of campaigning, the prospect of exerting his authority in procuring refreshments, was to say the least, equally so. To these two ends he sacrificed the impatience he felt, to display the success of his zeal to the Prior, and contented himself, for the present, with despatching a messenger to convey the pleasing intelligence. Night had already cast her mantle over the scene before the party was re-assembled, but the brightness of

the moon was sufficient to guide them, as they proceeded slowly on, forced, though unwillingly, to curb the speed of their impatient steeds, in order to suit the tardy and painful steps of those who pale and wounded followed on foot. From time to time the shrill blast of the trumpet startled the wild animals that were reposing around them; as the dry leaves crackled under their feet, the timid hare sprang from its form—the frightened stock-doves flew from their nests, and the squirrel, careless of danger, leapt from bough to bough. In this peaceful solitude the tread of armed men had been for some time unknown, and so completely was the whole troop despoiled of its soldier-like appearance, covered with dust and blood, that it seemed rather some ferocious banditti, fresh from a scene of midnight rapine, than a party of the legal defenders of the

land. It was not without difficulty that they proceeded, where the branches, left to grow as nature's wildness dictated, often swept their waving plumes, and the tough and knotted roots, concealed in the black shadows of the overhanging foliage, covered the path. Oaths and curses of impatience were the only words uttered, except a few low and scarcely breathed lamentations, which were sure to be followed by a blow or an injunction to silence, not very gently expressed. By degrees, however, the wood became thinner, and at a distance could be seen, through the trees, the twinkling lights that showed where cottage comfort was to be found. The trumpet sounded a longer and a louder peal; presently might be discerned, the lights moving like fairy meteors along the dark horizon; the stir of men was heard; the barking of village curs, and the bustle



naturally excited by sounds so new and alarming.

As the soldiers drew near these rapidly increased, and soon they could distinguish the shrill cries of children thus unusually awoke from their slumbers, and the supplicating voices of the women, entreating not to be forsaken. Many of the most discreet of the inhabitants leaving their houses half naked and but half awake, had repaired to the abode of the Consul, unable to form an opinion respecting the cause of so astonishing an occurrence until authorized by him. This worthy magistrate, whose presence of mind often unfortunately forsook him in emergencies when it was most necessary, readily joined his apprehensions to theirs, and could devise no expedient but a display of his official dignity to avert the danger, if such it should prove. Throwing, therefore, his



well-preserved white scarf over the everyday apparel, which, as it lay on a chair next his bed-side, he had instinctively slipped on, he proceeded to the Peyron, where, as the only open space in the village, the crowd had assembled. By this time, busy conjecture was aroused—all were eager with their surmises, and each impatient of contradiction, would sooner have seen the evils he foretold arrive, than be proved to have formed an erroneous judgment. Every voice was to be heard at once ; it was the reign of terror, supported by confusion, nor was “ the sight less strange than the sound.” Men half clad, with brawny limbs and uncombed locks, females for once forgetful of finery and coquetry, were seen by the light of numberless candles, lamps, and torches, whose red glare flung back from the dark walls of the surrounding houses, gave a wild appear-

ance to the whole. The Consul, every where but where he should have been, bustled from one group to another, commanding a silence he was unable to enforce, and prophesying safety while his heart sunk within him. At length, a troop of children, whom curiosity had rendered bold, were seen swiftly running down the principal street, exclaiming in accents of affright, "The soldiers! the soldiers! the king's soldiers are coming." It sometimes happens, that to weak consciences a military visit is an unwelcome honour, and so it proved on the present occasion. Many a boasting spirit quailed from an apprehension of inquiry being made into contributions not exactly paid, revenue dues eluded, or game illegally shot; even the chief magistrate himself it was conjectured would not unwillingly dispense with too minute a scrutiny. However there

was no time for deliberation; Vidal and his party were fast approaching, and as the horsemen drew up, at the thundering command 'to Halt' in the public place, the crowd ran back on each other as far as the scanty space would permit. Had they in other respects felt perfectly at their ease, the sight of many of their friends and acquaintance, pale, dejected, and bound with cords, would have been a painful elucidation of the mystery. After placing these poor creatures apart under a guard, and causing such of the troops to dismount as appeared most alert of hand, Vidal drew near to the terror-struck Consul with a bow, which he meant should express how much he considered himself as his superior. "Your servant, Sir," he he briefly began; "I am on his majesty's service, and assisted by this gentleman," pointing to the captain, "I have exter-

minated as fierce a horde of rebels as it was ever the fate of a loyal gentleman to meet with. I mean the greater part, for some certainly have escaped us, and unless they can fly like eagles or dig like moles, they must be concealed in this place. The necessity of the case is my warrant; with your leave I shall commit to your care the task of restraining your people, whom I see assembled here, and with a few of my friends make such search as I may judge proper. No ceremony, my dear Sir, I beg; we are brothers in office—pray don't stir."

The affrighted Consul, indeed, dared not oppose his intention: the bare suggestion of their having harboured rebels was sufficient to silence him, and he could only go from one to the other, hoping they were innocent, and protesting, if they were not, the blame must rest on their

own heads, since he could not reasonably be supposed to be sleeping quietly in his bed, and know at the same time what was going on in his neighbours' houses. Meanwhile Vidal, followed by the men he had selected, and their captain, who desired no better employment, began his domiciliary visits. With a rare sagacity, they selected the houses belonging to the best provided inhabitants, and from the length of their stay in each, it might have been deemed their search was very strict, if occasionally the screams of alarm or remonstrances, half in laughter and half in anger, from those left within, had not indicated that they found other amusements there. The increasing merriment indeed was soon a convincing proof that they had at least discovered a way to the good stores and the choice wines of the suspected householders ; so attractive was

the sport, that one by one the troopers, forgetful of their charge, betook themselves to it, and the whole village quickly proved the scene of a Bacchanalian orgie. The poor inhabitants, indignant at such treatment, would have driven their invaders away by force, but happily for them, a few of the most respected succeeded in soothing them to endurance: it was a Protestant commune, and therefore accustomed to suffer submissively; one night's rapine might be repaired, but a single act of opposition would bring down upon them such sure and certain vengeance as no submissions could avert. Meanwhile the wretched prisoners, disregarded amidst the scene of spoliation, in piteous tones, begged for something to quench their thirst. Amongst those whose charity induced them to bring them refreshment, such as they could secure



from the marauders, a barefooted girl about sixteen approached Pierre with a cup of water: he instantly recognised her as an inhabitant of St. Florent, to whom Madame Durand had shown great kindness, and eagerly inquired what news she had brought from thence. The girl could give him no late information, but informed him, that had this disaster not taken place, she was to have gone with her mother and several inhabitants of that village to be present at an assembly which was expected to be held not many miles distant. "Heaven grant," added the poor girl fervently, "these wild men do not come up with the poor creatures; the congregation will be mostly old men, women, and children, and there is little hope but in that case they would show their malice." Pierre inquired who the minister was, who was to preach on



this occasion, and learnt with the greatest dismay that the assembly had been summoned, upon the expectation of Monsieur Brunel accompanying Madame Durand on that day towards the low lands, and that it was probable that with the rest of her party she would be present. It was absolutely necessary, after hearing this, to warn the unsuspecting worshippers that at such a moment their meeting was unadvisable, if not dangerous, since the place at which it was fixed lay on the very route which Vidal and his troop were to pursue. To send the young girl on such an embassy was extremely hazardous, nor was he sufficiently sure of the disposition of the men of the village, who he thought suffered themselves too tamely to be oppressed, to trust to one of them. To be himself the messenger was above all things desirable, but was that to be

risked ? The danger he might incur was nothing ; what he chiefly feared was the heavier vengeance that would fall on his companions whenever his flight should be discovered. He hesitated for some time, however ; the occasion was urgent, and the opportunity too inviting to be neglected. The shouts of laughter and tumultuous cries increased ; it was probable that some time would elapse ere the men would return to their duty, and then in no state to make a close inspection, and he resolved afterwards to give himself up, should his escape be prejudicial to his fellow-captives. With the girl's assistance, he easily undid the knots that confined him, and stealing cautiously along under the shadow of the houses by the most unfrequented ways, gained the open country ; then with the speed with which he had often outstript the deer in

the chase, dashed on towards the spot where the girl had informed him the assembly was to be held, and by degrees the lights and noise from the village died away in the distance. To a late hour the scene of revelling and drunkenness continued; wearied at length with their excesses, the dragoons straggled back to their ranks, taking with them two or three poor vagrants, whom they had found in the haunts of poverty, as some pretext for their behaviour; and Vidal having, with all the superadded impudence of intoxication, harangued the Consul on his duties, with insulting shouts and loyal chorusses, they left a place where their presence had brought only alarm and mischief. The Consul, when the horses' tread was heard no longer, assumed a courage that was now become useless, and heroically promised his people, as a

return for what they had suffered, such a visit to Vallerargues as should afford them ample compensation. The troop gaily pursued their way, their spirits raised, and their self-consequence so much increased by their late successes in winning a battle and storming a town, that, despising military order, each took to the pace that his inclination prompted, and many a charge was made on the unoffending shrubs and bushes they met with in their way. In such a disordered march, the space they traversed was short in comparison with the time spent upon it, yet by the first streaks of morning light they had descended as far as Le Rance, another village situated near the foot of the mountains. The wide expanse of low lands lay before them, smiling with the unsullied beauty of returning day, rich with the ripening produce of autumnal stores, and

cooled by the freshness of the southern breeze: the song of the nightingale rose from every bush, and the lark flew upward, while chaunting her native song. A small river, whose waters, green and clear as an emerald, could scarcely be distinguished from the flowery meadows by which it was bordered, flowed beneath a shady wood, which, stretching along the foot of a soft sloping hill, was the only object that obstructed the view to an almost boundless horizon. Thin wreaths of smoke ascending from the scattered hamlets, hung over them like fleecy canopies in the still air, and the lowing of cattle, the bleating of flocks, and shrill cries of the herdsmen, animated the scene. Is it possible that men could be found so insensible to nature's charms, as, at such an hour, not to lose all thoughts of vengeance and deeds of violence? Such,

however, was the troop that accompanied Vidal: still reeking from the last night's debauch, they appeared more like fiends let loose to mar the beauty of this fair earth, than as its masters, permitted to enjoy its charms, and to regard it only as it afforded them the means of indulging in their riot and excess. The road they pursued lay direct to the wood, and on skirting the hill, they suddenly heard, amid the surrounding silence, the chorus of a hundred voices, in strains at once full and solemn, uttering the hymn of praise: they paused, and again the chorus rose more strong, and the plaintive sound of woman's voice could be distinguished.

“ Hark !” cried Vidal, checking his horse, “ if my ears, which are pretty well used to their canting, do not deceive me, we are about to fall in with a devout assemblage, after a long fast, taking in a



mouthful of comfort and instruction : Captain, I wish you joy of our luck ; I have long wanted to catch them in the act, with power to enforce my wishes, and I promise you, if it is as I apprehend, they run a chance of being choked with their own words, or of swallowing them in silence, at the point of the sword. Let us push on, my merry men, and he who is last in the chase, shall listen to a sermon an hour long, for his pains to-morrow." The captain, although still half stupified with the effect of the wine he had drank in profusion, could not refrain from interfering, and remonstrating with Vidal against a species of attack, which, though warranted by the strict letter of the law, had now been so long unattempted, that it might perhaps subject them to the censure of many who thought it better not to awaken terrors that had slept dur-



ing so many years. Vidal, who knew the temper of the troop, and was generally courageous when well seconded, turning fiercely round, begged to be informed if he was come there to learn law, or to execute justice. "Leave the event to me, Sir," he said, "you are now under my direction, thus it is ordained by our superiors; they rely upon my judgment and your force, and as it is but right that the head should direct the arm, I order you to disperse that assembly which is illegally held, consisting of persons styling themselves of the pretended reformed religion, warning them to retire on pain of fine and imprisonment, and to seize the trumpeter forth of heresy and rebellion, bringing him bound along with you. Gentlemen, if the captain hesitates, you have my permission to ride on." The captain did hesitate, and preferred re-

maining with those who kept the prisoners; the rest waited not for a second bidding, drawing their swords, and cocking their carabines, they galloped off, followed by Vidal, whose zeal had suddenly transformed him into a stout horseman. Could he have turned over one leaf of the book of Fate, he would not perhaps have hurried on so precipitately.

---

## CHAPTER III.

---

Ay, gnash thy teeth and tear thy hair,  
And roll thine eye-balls wild,  
Thou horrible accursed son,  
With a father's blood defiled !

*Malcolm's Heir.*

---

ON a smooth level, stretched between the river's brink and the tufted wood that skreened it from the rising sun, was that morning held, one of those religious meetings, which were silently tolerated among the Protestants in France, from the cessation of the Camisard wars, until the mighty influence of a superior mind restored them their temples, at the moment when he also opened the churches of their persecutors. It seldom happened that

such meetings were disturbed, although some instances are on record, of an armed force chasing the devout though timid worshippers to their homes. The zeal which opposition only serves to inflame was so fervent, that crowds always drew together to the places of assembly, obeying only a private summons, and unostentatiously choosing either the closing hour of evening, or preventing the morning watches, in order to be less observed. Sometimes stealing out of the towns before the gates were closed, they were prevented returning to their homes, till they were again opened, and were thus rendered liable to punishment, on the domiciliary visits of the officers in authority, who would rigorously fine them for their absence. So little do outward pomp and ceremony conduce to true religion, that it is probable more devotion

was felt, and more charity imbibed on the barren hills, or amidst neglected rocks and quarries, where, exposed to the heat of the sun, or the chilling blasts of winter, they listened to the revealed will of their Heavenly Father, than when reclining at ease, under the regular teaching of a certain and stated ministry. Of the numbers assembled on the morning of which we are speaking, many hearts were kindled with that love to God and man, which is the “fulfilling of the law ;” many, who had learnt in adversity how poor is all this world can offer, rejoiced to dwell upon the hopes of another and a better, and felt, not only that “*L'infortune semblable à un feu pénétrant fait exhaler de l'âme ses parfums les plus exquis,*” but that there is even a joy in those sorrows which bring the soul nearer to her God.

It was the intelligence quickly conveyed

through the neighbourhood, that Monsieur Brunel was to pass through Le Rance, in his way to the low country, which had brought together the old who rejoiced in the remembrance of his ministry, and the young, who had caught from their fathers a faint glow of the veneration he inspired. While Madame Durand and her friends were reposing at the village inn for the night, a deputation of grey-headed peasants had waited on the aged pastor, to entreat that he would preach to them. It was impossible to refuse, and scarcely had the morning star become pale in the west, when the whole party, consisting, besides the pastor and Madame Durand, of Rose, Louise, Andore and his Jeannette, repaired to the spot appointed for the solemn service. There was something imposing even in the simplicity of the congregation that met their

view. Seated in groups upon the green sward, or disposed so as to hear to most advantage amid the skirting underwood, a decorum and decency reigned amongst the crowds already met, that betokened their deep interest in the cause which brought them together. No light discourse was heard ; no unbecoming levity seen : the mothers hushed their children on their bosoms, or with gentle chidings quieted the elder ones that lay at their feet. In the midst was placed a chair, and on a desk before it the sacred volume ; around which, at a respectful distance, sat the aged elders, some furrowed with care, others with their long white locks hanging down on their shoulders, rapt in pious joy, all wearing that look of thoughtfulness and dignity which distinguishes those who have been exercised in dangers and difficulties, whether among the great or



the lowly : from time to time a psalm was given out, applicable to their present situation. At length the minister appeared, a low murmur of welcome greeted his presence, and was answered with his tears. The service began ; a short prayer elevated their hearts to thoughts of what they were about to be engaged in. In mute and breathless attention the hundreds sat, every eye fixed on one object, every ear drinking in the accents of one voice ; with minds raised above this lower world, they heeded not the approaching danger, till not only the shouts of the soldiers, but the pressure of the horses' hoofs roused them to the reality of oppression and outrage. The dragoons galloping right and left, drove the unhappy women screaming away, several were wantonly knocked down, some even felt the edge of their sabres, still keen for

blood ; confusion and horror reigned around ; the terrified children clinging to their mothers' knees, impeded their flight ; tottering age lost even the feeble force which in a calmer moment it might possess. The men, though unarmed, ventured to make a stand ; already some more brave than considerate, picking up the pebbles from the brink of the river, began to provoke a vengeance they had not power to resist, and risked for their faith, for their wives and children, those lives which they only considered as valuable, so long as they could be spent in their defence ; when Monsieur Brunel, leaving the spot which a wall of stout hearts had rendered one of safety, threw himself with open arms and an entreating voice before his irritated congregation. “ Stop, rash men,” he exclaimed, “ I supplicate you to stop ! Would you by your actions persuade our enemies

that it is resistance and rebellion I have been preaching to you? Rather practise the lessons of peace you have learned—retire to your homes in silence—remember who appoints every trial we meet with ; if they want a victim, let them take me ; I surely am the guilty one, if it is guilt to teach with my latest breath that law of God which commands love and good will towards all.” The stones fell harmless from the iron grasp that held them ready to hurl against the foe, but a confused murmur testified their determination not to leave their pastor while their presence could be any protection to him ; Vidal, who was provoked at a degree of patience he had not calculated upon, incited the soldiers to still greater violence. Leaping from his horse, he ran furiously to the venerable old man, and seizing him roughly by the arm, gave him in

charge to one of the dragoons, and turned immediately to the spot where Madame Durand and the rest of her party stood overwhelmed with anxiety and dismay. The appearance of Rose, about to be thrown thus completely into his power, was a sufficient incitement. "These too," he continued, "are a lawful prey ; these smooth-spoken corrupters of our peasantry must learn another lesson before they are set free, and bright eyes were not made to be dimmed by the tears drawn by a canting fanatic : to your duty, soldiers." The men obeyed his signal, and seizing Madame Durand and Rose, were preparing in like manner to lay hold of the terrified Louise, but a sudden stop was put to their proceedings ; a shriek so heart-piercing, so appalling, was heard, that the ruffians, aghast at the sound, for a moment paused. Even the Consul

drew back, shuddering and aghast. His victim lay before him; oh how unlike the lovely creature he had betrayed! Yes! there she lay extended on the turf; her dark hair had fallen from under her cap, and streamed over her whole person; with eyes, tearless and fixed, she regarded him, seeming to shrink from the sight, and yet powerless to turn away her gaze, as the poor animal who is fascinated by the glare of the basilisk. Nor was the seducer more calm, or his look less dismayed, at this unexpected phantom. If ever remorse touched his heart, it was at that moment; if he could have been turned from a course of violence and outrage, it must have been then: even the spectators perceived that he trembled, but the hour of repentance was past; the voice of conscience, so often silenced, had ceased to utter its low and solemn warn-

ings ; the triumphant villain had lived to conquer shame, and the goal of iniquity was already reached—his race was well nigh run. “ Does a poor mad creature frighten you,” he exclaimed, his colour returning as he spoke, and his courage reviving as he gazed on his awe-struck associates ; “ if you are such fools as to be afraid of this woman, I will show you the way to deal with her.” So saying, he grasped her by the arm with brutal violence, compelling her to rise ; her screams became louder and more piteous, but it seemed as if the sound only added to his fury ; her unhappy father on his knees entreated for her release, but Vidal, with fiend-like joy, smiled to see to what a degradation it was in his power to reduce him. So shocked were the assembled peasants at his barbarity, that, again assuming an attitude of defiance,



serious consequences might have been the result, had not an unlooked-for avenger at this moment appeared. Forced by his fear of detection to take a circuitous route, Pierre only reached Le Rance a few minutes after those against whose arrival he had wished to warn the inhabitants; the cries and screams he heard, the confused accounts of what was passing, given by the frightened fugitives whom he saw flying in every direction, excited his apprehensions, and panting and breathless with haste, he reached the field just in time to behold what it passed even his stoic firmness to bear, an insult offered to the being whose affection and misfortunes had equally endeared her to him. Drawing, therefore, the knife which he always carried about with him, from his sash, he flew to her rescue; already had he succeeded in disengaging her from the Con-



sul's grasp, by flinging himself with him on the ground; a short, but violent struggle ensued, but the Consul was no match for the stout mountaineer, who, forcing himself from his attacks, and pressing his knee on his antagonist's breast, held him fast and at his mercy. The enraged Consul, however, found means to draw a pistol from his belt; in a moment it was pointed at his opponent's heart; horror-struck at the sight, the wretched Louise wildly exclaimed, "Oh stay his hand for mercy's sake! Let him not murder his own son! The pistol went off; entangled in his shepherd's cloak, it had grazed his side but slightly, but on the smoke clearing away, it was perceived, that more just in his aim, Pierre, blinded by the desire of self-preservation, had plunged his knife in his father's bosom—if that man deserved the name of father, to whom his unhappy

child was only indebted for life and infamy! Yet no such extenuation presented itself to the mind of his assassin. The whole mystery was in a moment cleared up—in a moment too, when overpowering passion had driven him headlong to a deed from which his soul shrunk appalled! Though vaguely informed by the wretched Louise of the history of her wrongs, when some lucid intervals had permitted any explanation, he had been brought up in such detestation of Vidal, that reason's voice, which sometimes whispered the truth to his ear, was always silenced. Even when of late the Pilgrim had thrown further light on the young Baron De Courcy's concealment, he turned from the examination of his own birth with the infatuation of one who dreads the truth. To be forced to admit the dreadful conviction when it only served to prove

him a parricide!—to be compelled to lament the death of the man he most abhorred—What now could add to his agony ! The whole transaction had passed so instantaneously, that it was impossible for the exclamation of Louise to have stopped his uplifted hand ; of this all the by-standers were convinced, but it was in vain for the voice of friendship to suggest such a consolation to him ; he stood beside the body with his hands clasped, his eyes inflamed, and his whole countenance aghast, while his wretched mother lay senseless beside him, and the aged pastor, bent low in unutterable anguish, acknowledged the mysterious ways of Providence, and uttered the Christian's prayer. A gloomy dismay now reigned even amongst the hardened soldiers, who, though used to scenes of blood, were struck with such an awful transition from life to death, and

eagerly inquiring into the particulars that led to this horrid circumstance, they seemed little disposed to continue their violence, while the poor peasants forgot at once their wrongs and their fears before this loud-speaking interposition of divine justice. During the silence that succeeded, the officer, astonished at the unusual slackness of his troop, galloped forward to inquire into the cause ; the sight of the dead body covered with blood, which still flowed from the wound, was sufficient to explain it, and a few words informed him of the fatal termination of the morning's work. It was necessary that the unhappy murderer should be immediately placed in the hands of justice, and the unresisting Pierre was accordingly delivered to a guard of soldiers ; but as the captain had from the first objected to the attack on the assembly, he deemed it expedient

to dismiss all the other persons seized, with a few words of advice, ordering such as had been nearest when the deed was perpetrated to appear in proper time as witnesses. The body, wrapped in a cloak, was borne off by four of the dragoons ; and detested as the wretched man had been through life, none could behold this dreadful termination of his career without feeling their hatred diminish, and sentiments of compassion arise in their hearts. How mighty is the power of the grave ! which swallows up crimes and enmities that years of repentance could not efface, and makes us forget the injuries we had perhaps the moment before found it impossible even to forgive. The crowd, which had gathered tumultuously round, now opened to let the sad procession proceed : as it passed near the spot where Andore and his daughter stood, the

prisoner, till now so passive, suddenly stopped. Jeannette's heart whispered her he might be insensible to all beside, but could not be to her, and regardless of her father's remonstrances, she sprang forward and sunk into his arms. With convulsive strength he pressed her to his bosom; what a moment was that for hearts that had long in silence so deeply felt and suffered! Forgetful of the multitudes that gazed in idle wonder, as of the horrors that had but just occurred, for the first time they spoke of love: it was a flash of joy snatched from the gloom of undistinguishable despair, the triumph of fervent affection over the many waters that cannot quench it. The guards were, however, impatient to proceed; Pierre was soon compelled to resign Jeannette to her father; he gave but one kiss to her pale lips, and turned away his eyes,



bathed in tears of hopeless anguish—for they never met again !

The whole assembly gradually retired, conversing together in a low voice on the events that had taken place, and dwelling, according to their different dispositions, on the several particulars of each ; while Madame Durand, with her friends, determined on continuing their road to Vallegargues. It was evening when they reached the village, and the news of the Consul's death was known before their arrival. Groups of people, with important looks, were assembled at the corners of every street ; their nods and shrugs betokened the more than ordinary interest which they took in the subject of their conversation, and it so completely engrossed them, that hardly a casual salutation welcomed the travellers home. It was a gloomy evening for this season of



warmth and sunshine ; the air was oppressive, and seemed to threaten a storm, and the spirits flagged in the heavy, moist atmosphere. Already the death-bell tolled forth its dismal warning, and the women, as they hurried to vespers, crossed themselves in shuddering as the dull sound struck on the ear. Scarcely had Madame Durand entered her cottage, when Monsieur and Madame La Porte arrived, followed by old Madeline. With what eagerness he had watched their arrival, and flew to embrace his child, and to welcome his noble friend ! Clasped to a father's arms, from whom she had parted with so little hope of quickly meeting again, Rose for a few moments forgot her sorrows, and smiled as she was wont to do of old ; but her pale cheek and dim eye soon excited his alarm. Although but a few days had elapsed since his arrival

from Paris, during which the bustle and ceremony of receiving the new Intendant had occupied the attention of every one, yet vague rumours had reached Nismes before he left it of the disturbances which had arisen amongst the Protestants, and the share which Isidore was supposed to have borne in them. He dreaded the effect of this intelligence on his beloved child, should it prove true; yet he was almost grieved to find her totally ignorant of the reports in circulation, and pleading as the cause of her indisposition only the dreadful scene to which they had that morning been witness. While hope of its falseness remained, he determined, however, to be silent on this painful subject, and each had too much to communicate to suffer the conversation to languish.

After briefly relating what had occurred during his absence, and expatiat-

ing warmly on the kindness of the Count de St. Romain, La Porte presented Madame Durand with several packets of letters which had arrived since his return, both from the Baron de Courcy and her advocate, who informed her that a few days would now decidedly terminate the affair. It was therefore necessary that Monsieur Brunel and Andore should immediately repair to Montpellier, and to this they willingly consented. Nor was poor Madeline, who, impatiently waiting below, could no longer be refused admittance, the least to be pitied of the party : her grief, though loud, was sincere, when she found that no one could give her tidings respecting her dear son, and every evil that a mother's lively imagination could suggest, was resorted to as the cause of his absence. Yet all were grateful for being once more reunited, and they

offered up together their thanksgivings to the Author of all good to whom they trusted for removing also, in his good time, those clouds that yet overshadowed their prospects. Monsieur and Madame la Porte retired late, accompanied by Monsieur Brunel and his unhappy daughter ; with the virtues of the one, and the sorrows of the other, they had long since been acquainted, and every feeling of compassion was excited in their behalf ; and the mountaineer and Jeannette found as kind a reception in the cottage of Madeline, who was never backward in exercising hospitality. Those reports, however, which Monsieur la Porte had thought it advisable to conceal, were quickly made known by the loquacity of Leah Coste, who eagerly burst in the next morning as Madame Durand and Rose were alone, and with all the affectation of excessive grief,

poured forth her mingled lamentations and execrations on the subject of her cousin's murder. Drest in the deepest mourning, the malignity of her spiteful countenance was even heightened by the sable drapery that surrounded her lean and yellow cheeks ; an occasional hysteric burst of tears increased the effect, and might, under other circumstances, have provoked a smile ; but finding herself unable to interest her neighbours in her own distresses, Mademoiselle Coste endeavoured to excite emotion, by abruptly informing them of the current report respecting those late events with which the reader is acquainted, concluding her narrative with the assurance that Isidore had certainly fallen a victim to the rash conduct he had pursued.

This account, though too dreadful to be believed, could not be entirely disre-

garded. Poor Rose, for whom the blow was principally intended, was unable to conceal her feelings, and hiding her face in her hands, burst into a flood of tears. Madame Durand, who was herself extremely shocked, endeavoured to reason with her on the improbability of the whole story, at the same time reproaching the malicious informer with her indiscreet loquacity; but the impenetrable Leah Coste, with well-feigned surprise, declared she was as harmless as most people, and that really when young ladies were so love-sick, it would be most prudent of them not to keep it quite so close, as there was no saying when they might get a hit they little looked for.

After this kind speech, she departed, and Madame Durand instantly despatched a messenger for Monsieur la Porte, in the faint hope that he might be able to con-

tradict what her spleen had perhaps invented. In this they were however sadly disappointed ; such things had been repeated about the country, and however little credit he himself gave to the greater part, the fact of Isidore's imprisonment and escape was but too well ascertained, and of itself sufficient to plunge them in that painful state of uncertainty, which is scarcely less difficult to bear than the truth itself. It is, however, necessary to return to Father Gabriel's deserted cell, in order to learn how far Mademoiselle Coste's veracity was to be relied on.

---



## CHAPTER IV.

---

Know then that some of us are gentlemen,  
Such as the fury of ungovern'd youth  
Thrust from the company of awful men.  
*Two Gentlemen of Verona.*

---

HAPPILY for Rose, the blow which Isidore received was not fatal ; stunned by its force, he remained for some hours insensible, and when life again returned, the past appeared like a dream, and the present as a mere deception of fancy : his head, still filled with uncertain ideas of war and tumult, he found himself stretched on the ground in a large cavern, to which the light was only admitted through an aperture high in the rock ; but his recol-

lection gradually returned, and the pain and stiffness which he felt on attempting to rise, convinced him at length, that he was not deceived by the visions of sleep, but was in deed and truth sheltered after the action of the preceding day, in some recess of the Hermit's abode. With considerable difficulty he managed to stand; the throbbing of his head was violent, and a quantity of clotted blood on his clothes, showed the injury he had received to be of more consequence than he at first apprehended. It was therefore necessary for him to seek some way of exit, and after groping about a considerable time, an opening presented itself so well concealed, as to be with difficulty discerned by those unacquainted with the secret, as it lay under the shade of overhanging rocks, and led, not to the common room, but to a winding passage, where nature

had evidently been assisted by the hand of art in forming its intricacies. Wearied and impatient, he was often inclined to give up the attempt as hopeless ; but the fear of remaining there neglected by those to whom he had owed his safety, gave spirit to his search, and after a considerable time, he found himself in the open air.

It was now near midnight, the moon was high, and her tranquil light lay upon the rocks and woods, and shone on many a brave mountaineer, in the morning full of life and hope, now a cold corpse, stretched out and horrid to the view. The combat therefore was over, but how it had terminated, those who had fallen its victims were unable to tell : memorials of their own fate, they were insensible to that of their comrades, and not even a sigh was heard amongst them, giving hope that life was not entirely extinguished ;

to the last breath they had bravely fought! Yet the waving of the branches in the breeze, and the heavy flap of the eagle's wing as he hovered over his prey, were their only requiem. Isidore, sick at heart, at this contemplation of man slain by his brother, would have quickly departed, but his increasing faintness compelled him to rest, and as he turned to seek the Hermit's couch, and perhaps some cordial to recruit his force, the sound of a human voice made him start, and hastily retire from a spot where he could be so easily distinguished, to the shelter of the overhanging rock. Scarcely had he reached this retreat, when the figure of a man was seen to advance, and the stranger began to examine the bodies as they lay, without, however, attempting to despoil or remove them.

As the moonbeams fell full on his face,

Isidore recognised the well-remembered features of the Pedlar, whose sympathy he had excited on the occasion of his arrest at the baraque, near the Pont du Gard, and who now by his dress and accoutrements, appeared to have adopted the trade of a travelling Tinker. It was indeed the same Gaspard who had once served as a guide to the unfortunate Vidal, a lively and ingenious lad, ready, according to the saying, to “turn an honest penny” in any calling, and not unwilling to shift his profession as well as his quarters, as circumstances might require.

Gaspard, however, soon entered the cave, where he remained some time, and on his return, a look of vexation was visible on his countenance: seating himself on a stone that lay near the door-way, he began by drawing his implements from his havresâc, and applying himself to

some branch of his employment, cheered his labour with half-reciting, half-singing, in a most humorous tone of voice, the following couplet:—

The trade of a tinker, I speak without pride,  
Was the first at which man's ingenuity tried ;  
And he who the reason can't guess, it is clear,  
Knows nought of the joy of good housewives who hear  
The well-known cry of Eh ! fi lanternie !

Eh ! raccomodi soufflè !

Eh ! fondeur di cullié !

It appeared evident to Isidore, that this young man, whatever might be the reason, was interested in his fate, and probably now employed to remove him from his retreat: he therefore soon ventured on leaving his hiding-place, and touching the Tinker on the shoulder, said, “ A joyous traveller you are, my friend ; if I may judge by your merriment in such company.” The Tinker started, “ Faith, Sir,” he replied, “ I am not worse off for gaiety than

my neighbours, though I must own I am just now little in heart for it ; but before we converse more freely, I must beg you to drop your shade," for Isidore had carefully enveloped himself from inspection in his cloak ; he instantly complied. " I am right then," continued the Tinker, " though where you were hid that my eyes could not find you, or how you got out without my help, it passes my poor wits to understand. I thought if you were within hearing, you might know my voice again, which was the reason of my singing aloud." After explaining these points, Isidore in his turn begged to know by what means his life had been saved, and how the fortune of the day had turned. The Tinker briefly informed him, that in the confusion which had succeeded to his fall, Pierre had, with his assistance, drawn him into the cave, and by a way he could



not have discovered, found means to place him in safety, intending to return and deliver him when all danger should be over. “And truly he’d have done it,” continued Gaspard; “but you know, though man proposes, he cannot dispose, and it was disposed otherwise for him. We fought like lions I will say, but what chance had we against the soldiers? Why it’s their trade; they’re brought up to it from childhood, and we only take to it by way of amusement, and know no more about the matter than if you were to begin soldering an old saucepan. In short, we were obliged to run, and Pierre, who wouldn’t turn his back, was taken with several others. Poor fellow! I loved him as a brother, but finding I could do nothing for him, I came to try what could be done for you, since my last attempt to get you out of a scrape proved so success-

ful." Isidore thanked him for his kind intentions, inquiring at the same time if he would add to the obligation by procuring him some place of repose for the night, and such assistance as his wound required. Gaspard replied, that he had provided a shelter before coming in search of him, assuring him also, that he had watched the enemy far on their way, and that he might consider himself safe where he would take him for some hours, as the house, though now deserted, belonged to one who was reputed a zealous and loyal Catholic, and therefore not so liable to suspicion, but that the following morning it would be expedient to make some further arrangements. Accordingly, bidding Isidore keep close to him, and each casting a look of compassion on those they left, and who Gaspard declared would be removed by their friends on the ensuing

day, he crept under the brushwood in the rear of the Hermitage, and with great difficulty, by keeping at times the same crouching position, and at others scrambling by the points of the rocks, they gained a roughly-worn sheep-walk, and following its direction, at length emerged into a chase more thinly scattered with underwood, and perceived at the end of an avenue of walnut-trees a large, old fashioned, straggling, white-washed dwelling, to which they bent their steps. It had evidently been a place of some consequence, though now surrounded only by the accompaniments of husbandry, and possibly still contained apartments which were reserved for the casual reception of its lord. At present it offered the appearance of a farm-house, with its yards, stables, dove-cots, and workshops, where every trade might be carried on necessary in such an

establishment ; but there was no sound of bleating flocks, cackling poultry, or noisy labourers ; no house-dog to guard the premises from mendicants or thieves ; no scolding, bustling maidens, with their tongues moving faster than their hands. Small windows, strongly fenced with iron bars, were distributed in irregular profusion over the building ; the high pointed roofs shone in the moonlight, as if, like the enchanted castles of old, they had been covered with plates of silver ; and at one corner of the edifice a large round tower, with its appropriate loop-holes and battlements, seemed well fitted for defending the dwelling against the predatory bands which had at one time infested the country. Comfort might have reigned there, but she was evidently banished, and poverty and neglect had usurped her place. After opening with difficulty the gate, which

hung on its oaken hinges, and was flanked by two pillars, each supporting the remains of a rampant fox, Isidore and his companion crossed the straw-littered court, and approached the tower, at the door of which stood an old woman, who appeared as if left guardian of the house, half retreating in and half extending her head, as if in the act of listening. "Good night to you, dame," said Gaspard; "you think, I suppose, that your little gray eyes set in their fiery circles shine like two stars, or you'd have put up the light I begged to have against my return: it's not every man could find his way out of that wood without it." The old woman in terms equally gracious assured him, that having heard some unpleasant sounds she had extinguished it, for there was company in her house who wished to be private, and she saw no reason why their fancy was to be balked

to save his neck, which was made to be cut short sooner or later. Gaspard lifted up his hand, and made a motion as if to apply a sound slap on her withered cheek ; but Isidore, seizing the uplifted arm, remonstrated on the impropriety, as well as folly, of irritating a person in whose power they seemed to be, and the old woman setting up a hoarse laugh, and declaring she was only in jest, the whole passed off without further consequence. She now threw open the door, which she had held so as only to admit of her own person being seen, and they entered a room where several men were seated round a blazing fire, which, owing to the thick outside shutters, had not been visible before. This room seemed the only one which the dame occupied, as it presented in a small space all those conveniences that are in general dispersed in different apartments :



in one corner stood an old fashioned four-posted bed, with thick faded silk curtains drawn back to display the bénitier for holy water, and next to it a high dresser covered with red and yellow crockery, placed there as much for show as use. The floor was strewn with brass pans, earthen-ware, kitchen utensils, tubs in which the first process of washing was going on, and a hen-coop well stored with poultry. On a rack, suspended from the roof, were the week's store of flat round loaves of black bread, large as the shields of the ancients, and almost as hard; huge gourds and pumpkins to form the savoury soup, and strings of sausages and black puddings, with a stock of lard tied up in bladders, sufficient to turn the stomach of a Jew. Add to this a kneading trough, and a few broken chairs drawn round the ample chimney by the guests, who were



employed in the various parts of cookery, one holding an immense frying-pan, while another poured in large floods of oil, and a third prepared the eggs for an omelette. The table was already spread, the wine sparkling, and all with one voice congratulated Gaspard and his companion on their meeting at so lucky a moment. In such a party, ceremony would have been an intrusive guest, and whatever cause they might have for fear, it seemed at least for a season banished from their minds. Isidore gathered from their discourse that he had met with some of the refugees from the skirmish; men, as ready to fly as to engage, and who urging on a cause while they think it will prosper, forsake it with as much haste when it is in danger, as a mariner does his sinking ship. Situated as he then was, it was no time for nice reflections, and after receiv-

ing from the old woman such surgical aid as her skill and her means afforded, he sat down with the rest to partake of the specimens of their joint culinary talents. While appetite was keen, no conversation could be carried on, and little passed, except a few not very refined or decorous jokes with the dame, who had taken her seat in the chimney-corner to supply them as they needed with fresh viands: it did not appear that her feelings or her tongue were more nice than theirs, and, disgusted with the scene, Isidore soon began to inquire where he could rest for the remainder of the night, when he was interrupted by one of the party begging to know if he had not any unpleasant reflections to break his repose, that he seemed in such haste to seek it. Isidore, with much surprise, inquired what he meant. "Nothing extraordinary," he replied,

“ but I thought that we all came here for another purpose than to sleep ; however, if you are of a different opinion, I do not wish to prevent your slumbers.” Isidore assured him his coming was quite accidental, and that as soon as he should be recovered from his fatigue, he intended to continue his journey to Vallerargues, where he felt extremely impatient to find himself once more. A smile of contempt appeared on every countenance, at a reply that struck them as so innocent and simple. “ By all means,” continued the man who had first spoken, and whose name was Lebrun, “ you are your own master ; but with only half what you have to answer for, I shouldn’t care to run my head into the lion’s jaws, unless, indeed, I wished to give him a breakfast at my expense. Come, old lady, fill my pipe again, and let us drink off another bumper

to this spirited knight, who means to run a tilt with Dame Justice." Isidore again begged an explanation of his astonishment. "And do you really think," replied the other, shaking the dead ashes from his pipe as he spoke, "that after yesterday's affair, we or any men of sense would go quietly about like sparrows in a frost, crying, come catch me? Why, lad, there is not one of us but might in that case give up to the government all care for our food, clothes, and house-rent, for the rest of our lives; add to this little peccadillo, that you, I am told, have just taken very uncivil leave of a gaol where you were put in for murder, and, I have also heard, are suspected of running away from the claws of a recruiting serjeant to boot. Is all this true?" Isidore could not but allow he had heard correctly, but added, that he had not the least doubt of making his

innocence in all these cases apparent. "Have you not?" replied the other, "I can only say, if you do, you are cleverer than I thought you; take my word for it, for I have had a pretty good share of experience, suspicion and guilt are twin sisters, and few men know them asunder; as says the proverb, 'he who has the longest sword is always in the right.' A man's innocence is like a merchant's credit and a woman's honour, which only last as long as they are unsuspected. As for mine, I freely own I found it as difficult to keep as a Venice glass, so I got rid of it long ago, and I always suppose my friends have had the good sense to do the same." "I am not surprised at that," said one of his companions, a small black-looking desperado, with a peculiarly sly expression of countenance, "for it is easy to guess what those are who are

found in your company.” “ It’s only the doctrine of sympathies,” cried a third, “ that draws us so closely together.” “ Silence,” interrupted Lebrun, “ you are not before your confessor now, and there’s nothing against a man’s wearing a cloak of honesty to cover his rags, when it’s not in the way of his advancement: but as for you, young Sir, new as I take it to the world, I feel strongly inclined to throw away a little advice upon you, and perhaps you may profit by it better than I have done by what I have received. Unless you are tired of life, you had better disappear for a short time.” Isidore assured him, he should certainly consult his safety, should it prove necessary, but was entirely ignorant by what means it could be secured; as he was so well known in the country, it would be difficult for him to conceal himself, and that particular



reasons would prevent his leaving it immediately. “ Caught by a little birdlime, probably,” replied Lebrun ; “ but when I wish to do a kindness, I’m for crossing no man’s fancies ; I freely, however, offer you to join my company : if you prefer a last look at your mistress through the noose of a halter, that is your affair. To show you, however, that I am not a man of words only, here, Cæsar, you young scoundrel, bring out our travelling dresses, and let us equip.” The youngest of the party, who was already nodding in his chair, on hearing the well-known voice, which, sleeping or waking, he obeyed, sprang over the seat near him with the alertness of an uncaught monkey, and going to one corner of the room, threw out of some old sacks, a variety of dresses of various kinds, together with a three-stringed guitar, tambourine, and triangle,

wigs, patches, and other means of disguise.

The whole party, with the exception of Isidore, Gaspard, and the old woman, who shook her sides with laughter at the sudden transformations taking place, had, in a few minutes, so completely altered their appearance, that it would have defied the minutest scrutiny to detect them from being any other than a troop of itinerant musicians and jugglers. Lebrun himself, in a three-cornered cocked hat, a pigtail of enormous length, his hair hung in long shaggy locks over his face, a brown jacket with voluminous skirts, ostentatiously displaying its scarlet linings, a waistcoat of the same colour falling in deep flaps over his well-worn leather breeches, and a huge pair of gaiters of the same material, might have passed for an Auvergnois newly descended from his mountains ;

Cæsar, whose beardless chin and roguish smile could best admit of the change, with a red handkerchief smartly put on his head, a velvet bodice and blue petticoat, seemed a pert coquette of sixteen ; and a third, in the dress of a roving Catalan, strummed on his guitar a lively Spanish bolero, to which he sang the following strain :—

Oh ! give me a passport from care and from strife,  
From the railings and threats of a termagant wife ;  
And give me to roam, as new fancies invite,  
O'er the wild hills and valleys, by day and by night,  
With my tinkling guitar.

'They may boast of dame freedom who lord it o'er slaves,  
Or who win her an altar on tyrants' graves ;  
But the freedom for me, is to live at my ease,  
To quaff the red wine, and to sing where I please,  
To my tinkling guitar.

Then pledge me in drowning the thoughts of to-morrow,  
What is past too's a dream, be it pleasure or sorrow ;  
Had I coin in my pocket, or houses, or fields,  
Could I taste half the pleasure that liberty yields,  
With my tinkling guitar ?

“ Well done,” exclaimed one of the party, as the measure ceased, “ we are a merry crew, however little the wiseheads may account of us ; but perhaps a grain more discretion at this moment might not be improper. There may be eavesdroppers, you know, and in this strangely-ordered world, every fool thinks himself at liberty to call a jolly fellow to account when his mirth oversteps the rules of dull senseless regularity. I vote for business now, and pleasure after.”

“ Business, indeed !” retorted his next neighbour, “ I could have sworn you had been bound hand and foot to a retail linen-draper, even if I had not enticed you myself from behind the counter, with a yard measure in one hand, and a pair of scissars in the other.”

“ And what is that to you ?” replied the son of commerce, with some vehemence,

“ if we come to recollections, I might whisper pretty things.”

“ Silence !” again exclaimed Lebrun, “ he who remembers an iota of what he knew before he joined fellowship with us, I hold to be a snivelling traitor to good society, and sentence to be sent back into the orderly walks of life.” Then turning to Isidore, he said, “ I repeat my offer, young stranger, but if you would follow us, you must fare as we do, for a speckled sheep would ruin the flock.”

Isidore, after consulting for some time with Gaspard, judged it most prudent to accept his proposal. It seemed indeed necessary that he should remain unknown for the present, in order to learn in what light he was hereafter to appear : to ascertain the fate of the misguided Father Bernardine, and the safety and happiness of his dearest friends, was his first con-

cern, and this would undoubtedly be better accomplished under the proposed disguise, than if, in his own person, he should render himself liable to pursuit. With many thanks, therefore, he followed Lebrun's advice, and a dress, such as he desired, was produced.

All particulars arranged, Isidore again begged leave to repose for a short time, which was granted, as they did not purpose setting out till the dawn of day, and throwing himself upon an old-fashioned settee, the fatigue he had undergone, and the want of sleep of the preceding night, procured him some feverish rest, notwithstanding the uproar that was still kept up around him. Yet, when in the intervals of sleep, he reflected on his present situation, he could not forbear a sigh. The contrast, too, of the boisterous mirth within, and the calm majesty of the scene with-



out, was striking. It appeared strange, that echoes, accustomed only to the song of the turtle-dove, should now repeat the oaths and acclamations of such a company ; the gentle motion of the branches when swayed by the breeze—the solitary evening star just risen above the faintly-tinged horizon, and almost lost in the splendour of the moonlight—the balmy air that wafted a thousand sweet odours through the broken casement, all spoke the loveliness of nature, and heightened the feeling of disgust at the presence of polluted man. Yet neither the soothing calm of the night, nor the tumult of his companions, had power to quell the restless curiosity respecting his own fate, which Father Bernardine's information had excited in Isidore's breast : he felt like one, who, finding a mass of gold on a desert island, is unable to use the trea-

sure. In his eagerness to escape, he had omitted to possess himself of the means by which his rank in society was to be established, and should any fatal occurrence put an end to the Pilgrim's life, of what benefit would his communication prove? Still there was a latent hope in his bosom, a feeling of confidence which a great mind never entirely foregoes, a dependance not merely on his own powers, but much more on Him, who, from the midst of His majesty and omnipotence, neglects not the care of the meanest of His creatures. "I have drifted along," thought Isidore, as his eye glanced on the blue firmament, across which some light clouds were then rapidly passing, "like yonder cloud, sometimes illuminated with the beams of joy, sometimes left in obscurity and gloom; but the same being who destined it to float its little moment

in the air, and then to fall in refreshing dew upon the soil that gave it birth, can sustain me also, and though, like it, I am to all appearance unsupported, I may yet prove a blessing to those around me. Are the beasts that roam the desert less provided for than those that depend on the care of man? Does the eagle, while he wings his solitary and daring flight, fare worse than our feathered subjects, who, deprived of the means of self-preservation, are pensioners on our bounty? It is the proper dignity of man to rely only on himself and on his God, and betide what may, I will seek no other protection!"

The resolutions of youthful independence, which, ignorant of the world, knows not what is requisite to meet its subterfuges, tended to reconcile Isidore for a time to his circumstances; and when Lebrun at length gave notice that it was

time to depart, he had already formed some plan for his future conduct. It was necessary, he considered, to make this half ruffian his friend. Isidore well knew that unless a character is utterly depraved, there is always some good point on which we may lay hold, and that nothing is so likely to secure a man's assistance as to convince him we absolutely stand in need of it. Few are so bad as not to be pleased at being able to confer an obligation. The feeling bears some resemblance to those sentiments of virtue which they have abjured, but would perhaps return to, if the backward path were not so painful; it is like a sudden recollection of the unalloyed pleasures of childhood in the mind of the gray-headed old man. For this purpose, while the rest were settling and disputing with the avaricious dame respecting the remuneration

ration for the supper and shelter they had enjoyed, and for which she was disposed to make them pay according to their need, he drew Lebrun aside, and giving him the reasons which induced him, before taking any other steps, to visit Vallerargues, begged his advice as to the best manner of so doing. Lebrun nodded his head significantly, as much as to say, "If I was not a conjuror, may I never be believed on my word again." He then added, "It's a foolish errand let me tell you, young man, you are on; but as you seem to think women's hearts are made of softer stuff than I have found them to be, why I believe I must e'en go there with you myself. I have taken a fancy to you—there's my hand, and while we are together, you may depend on my services; only remember for two things I always part company; if I am contradicted or if I am preached to,

for I'd as soon have a good knock on the head, as what the shaven crowns call ghostly counsel, which always makes my blood run cold, as if I was going to be made a ghost of in good earnest. I think we had better take that young Tinker with us; he's a smart dog, though as like an unlicked bear as any animal can be that walks on two legs; and with my Francis, we shall do pretty well. It's all one to me which way the compass points." This division of the party was soon arranged; the others settled the road they should take, and as his companions filed off before him, Lebrun exclaimed, "My good wishes for your success go with you, my friends, for such another set it would be difficult to meet in a week's journey; it's strange if we don't meet again soon, for there's an attraction draws us strongly together." They vociferated their fare-



well in terms equally polite, and Isidore prepared to follow his new conductor; but the old woman stopping his progress with her outstretched hand, he threw into it a coin of such value, that she declared it would be in vain for him to play the part of a blackguard, since any one might know him to be a real gentleman with half an eye.

---

## CHAPTER V.

---

But see! the well-plumed hearse comes nodding on,  
Stately and slow, properly attended——

————— Tell us why this waste?

Why this ado in earthing up a carcass

That's fallen into disgrace?——

BLAIR.

---

“AND when these happy moments are over,” said Lebrun to his new companion, as they walked briskly on, “am I to hope for a continuation of your company, or do you intend to spend the succeeding days in fruitless lamentation after them.”

“Indeed of that,” replied Isidore, “I am yet as ignorant as yourself; there are times when a man had better not form any resolutions, since if he is inclined to be obstinate, he will keep them at his

peril, and if he abandons them, he has the consolation of being forced to own he was in the wrong."

"Just so," said Lebrun, "and for my part that has been my maxim through life, which is the reason, that though brought up a cobbler, I have by turns figured as a soldier, a dancing-master, a thief and thief-taker, a mendicant friar and travelling musician ; it seemed as if fortune, out of spite, had always called upon me to forsake my profession at the very moment I began to make some proficiency in it, and as the proverb says ' a galloping horse often wants shoeing,' you see what I have gained by it."

"And had you no friends to fix you to some pursuit in the early part of your life?" said Isidore.

"Friends," repeated Lebrun ; " I had relations like most other people ;

very worthy, sober persons they were, but they soon forsook one, who, instead of keeping in the straightforward path they walked in, was running twice the length of the way in the zig-zag mazes of folly : you might as well have thought of catching a wild deer, and driving it to market like an ass with a pair of panniers on its back, as have attempted to make me go the pace they wished. There was one indeed, my mother, peace to her memory ! I always feel a something rising in my throat when I speak of *her* ; she winded me about as a young damsel does a skein of wool upon her reel, but she died of a fever instead of a broken heart, that's all the difference, and spared me one crime the more. But enough of this ; let's talk of your affairs, for they can yet be mended : are you off as soon as the last words are spoken ?”

“ I have another call on my attention,” said Isidore ; “ the fate of the poor old man, who so generously took my place in the prison ; I cannot be easy without knowing how he has fared since then ; I mean Father Bernardine.”

“ I know him,” answered Lebrun, “ as most people do in these parts ; but take my advice, and don’t be over-scrupulous about him. If once the law lays hold of him, I fancy he’ll have a pretty score to clear off ; and depend upon it, if he can’t get himself out of its clutches, it would be quite presumptuous in any other person to attempt it for him. However, as time is valuable, while you are whispering soft things, I will make all possible inquiry respecting the old veteran, and you may then proceed as you think proper. But now, young man, I don’t mean to be indiscreet, and therefore shall not take it ill

if you refuse to answer me, (and as for a question about my own affairs, I seldom let a man put a second to me;) but I must say that it would please me to know what you can find worthy your affection in a person who is so little likely to excite it."

"Affection," said Isidore, "is perhaps too strong a term, but we seldom stop to consider the worth of those who help us out of a difficulty. The connexion I have had with Father Bernardine is so strange, that I scarcely know how to explain it; however, if a brief sketch of my unadventurous life will suffice as an answer, I have no scruple in laying it before you." He then proceeded to relate from his earliest remembrance the occurrences which had befallen him, vaguely hinting at the discovery made him by the Pilgrim. A strong feeling restrained him from confiding to a stranger, what might be treated



merely as the effervescence of vanity or the dream of youthful imagination. But slight as the hint was, it did not escape the penetration of Lebrun, habituated to quickness of observation and accuracy of conclusion. He remained for some time silent, revolving in his mind what he had just heard, and connecting it with the expressions dropped by Father Bernardine, which had not fallen on an inattentive ear, and the vague rumours which it was natural to suppose had circulated respecting the young and valorous leader he had promised them. After some time, hastening on so as to be beyond the hearing of their companions, he seized hold of Isidore's hand, while at the same time he dashed off a tear that trembled in his dark eye, and in a voice half-choked with emotion, said, " I once had a kindness done me, the only one I ever remember receiv-

ing from a stranger ; it has lain like a weight upon my heart, that I was as powerless to return it as if I had been that worm you see crawling on our path ; but never shall I forget the oath I took to be a true friend to the Baron de Courcy, my benefactor, till death. I cannot now be deceived—you are his son ; blind that I was not to see it before—I, who thought that even the shadow of his noble form could never pass by me unknown. Tell me in what way I can serve you ? Ask no questions about me—be not tempted by the idle abuse that may be lavished on my character to cast away one who has no wish to deceive you ; men have seen only what is wrong in me, it remains for you to find out that there is still some good ; only trust me without suspicion—bad as I am, that I cannot brook.” Isidore, struck by the warmth and earnestness with which

he uttered this incoherent speech, pressed his hand in return, and with sincere gratitude thanked him for his offered assistance. Ignorant as he was what line of conduct to pursue, prudence required that he should not reject any counsel that might be given, or repulse any who came to him with offers of friendship ; he therefore candidly owned to him all that the Father had revealed to him, and the opposition that would be probably made to his claims by the pride and avarice of the Prior of St. Roc.

The remarks of Lebrun, and the good sense evident in his advice, soon convinced Isidore that his confidence was not misplaced, and before they had travelled many miles together, he became still more anxious to know to whom he was indebted for so kind an interest in his welfare, and whether it would not be possible for one

who seemed capable of better things to forsake a way of life disreputable at least, if not criminal; but as quickly as the countenance of Zobeide changed, when at the indiscreet question of the porter she clapped her hands and called up her terrific blacks, the face of Lebrun darkened; "Talk not to me," he said, "of return; you know not the way I have trod; do you think that the heart retains its purity amidst the pollution of vice? or that the evil course of the prodigal is only a transient wandering? Yet light as I may at times appear, there is a worm at my heart. But as water is disgusting to him who has inured himself to ardent spirits, so is goodness to one who, like me, has plunged into the excess of riot; the dispensation is just, that our taste should grow to what we choose to follow. No, no, I am not a hypocrite; your good

people are too dull for me yet ; but here we are within sight of a village, and you would have me treat them with an *ore pro nobis*, instead of a jig. Strike up my merry men—

Light of foot and light of heart  
Trip it to my minstrelsy,  
Mirth and music I impart,  
Pay me with your courtesy.

Thus at every place through which they passed, the troop, faithful to their disguise, attracted a crowd by their merry notes. The children holding each other by their little hands, jumped eagerly about, their screams of joy almost overpowering the melody ; women ran with their infants in their arms to dance them to the measure, while the old laughed as they sat still, and many a young labourer leaving his task, and coming slyly behind a gazing damsel, little loth to be forced into the sport, would put his arm round

her waist, and whisk her about in the rapid waltz. In this manner, and refreshed whenever they felt inclined to stop, with brown bread and clusters of fresh-gathered grapes and figs, they proceeded along, obtaining a ready shelter at night, and reached Vallerargues late in the evening of the second day of their journey.

Isidore, as he drew near to the village, slouched his hat more over his eyes; each well-known face he met seemed to regard him with suspicion, and he expected every moment to hear his name pronounced. One of the first houses he was obliged to pass, was that of his adopted mother; the shutters were closed, but through their crevices he could discern her sitting by the fire in her well-known seat, leaning her face on her hands, and apparently absorbed in thought: he



almost fancied that, even during so short an absence, he perceived her form more bent, and her appearance more dejected. Was it for him she grieved? Scarcely could he refrain from lifting the latch, and restoring her to comfort by his presence, but a sharp touch from Lebrun, who was apprehensive lest his feelings should be remarked, roused him from such an imprudent idea, as her screams of joy would inevitably have attracted the whole party whom their music had assembled before the door. Late as it was, few of the villagers had retired to their homes ; the men, who were returned from the fields, though they had deposited their empty wallets, spades, and mattocks, seemed, notwithstanding their heated and fatigued looks, to be rather preparing to set out again than for rest, and loitered listlessly in the streets, expecting a summons. As

the minstrels advanced with their usual train of young idlers, to where a few were gathered in a group, Isidore caught the voice of Simon Chas, who, assuming a degree of consequence from his "inky cloak," was loudly inveighing against the indecency of suffering such immoral pipings, while his late master's body still lay unburied, and the mass was saying for the repose of his soul. Struck with the intelligence, he with difficulty refrained from inquiring his meaning, but the more cautious Lebrun again checked him, and affecting great submission to the public will, instantly desired the music to cease, and declared his readiness even to join in a funeral dirge rather than offend, adding at the same time a humble request that he might be informed who his master was. "If you don't know that," said Simon, "you must blame yourself for your igno-

rance, since all are welcome to the knowledge of what's a secret to no one, and my master's name was as well known as is the sun at noon-day. It's not just the moment, to be sure, to say much upon the subject of the late Consul of this place ; if you had been acquainted with him, you'd know the reason why ; but I should be sorry, friend, to throw a bar in the way of your profession ; as you seem a modest, well-behaved, discreet sort of man, you may come with me to attend the funeral at the Priory, giving us, if you please, a little psalmody on the way, and as soon as all is over, I will let you further into the merits of the case ; you shall refresh your body with a comfortable glass, and my spirits with a care-killing song of the more jocular sort, for this grief agrees but ill with my constitution." The latter part of this speech was uttered

in a whisper, sufficiently low not to be heard by the crowd; Lebrun, who imagined this new acquaintance as likely as any other to prove communicative, readily assented to the proposal, and with a significant glance at Isidore, recommended Gaspard and Francis to keep themselves sober, and be found at the cabaret on his return. Simon, having marshalled all whom he could persuade either from curiosity, or the more vindictive motive of seeing the last of their oppressor, to attend him to the Priory, set off, followed by Lebrun; and Isidore, separating himself from his other companions, turned his steps towards the dwelling of Madame Durand. He had previously agreed with Lebrun, that he should meet him there, after obtaining whatever information he could collect, and had, above all, recommended his silence in Madame Durand's

presence respecting the Pilgrim's communication, as he dreaded the agitation it might occasion her in her delicate state of health.

When he drew near to the house, he felt it difficult to bear with calmness the tumultuous pleasure that filled his heart, at the prospect of again seeing Rose. There was something in the very air she breathed, an expectation of the sound of her voice so agitating, that he was forced to lean against the rails to recover himself ; and none but those who know what it is to dread a lengthened absence from that being who occupies all our affection, can understand, that even the fear of Madame Durand's having, contrary to her intentions, prolonged her stay at St. Florent, was a relief, and in some degree restored him to self-possession.

In order, first, to ascertain whether this

fear were well-founded, he began to play on his hautboy, an air which he had learned in consequence of Rose's praises, and which she well knew he never played but for her, and soon had the delight of seeing a white hand cautiously open the casement, and a head, such as Guido might have given to his youthful Madonnas, lean gently forward, to learn who was the minstrel: that moment's glance was sufficient, it seemed as if a wish could scarcely be formed before the door was unfastened, and he was desired to walk in, as the ladies wished to hear his music up stairs. It was Monsieur Brunel who admitted him, and with whom he ascended into a room where so many happy hours had passed. Madame Durand, more pale and emaciated than he had yet seen her, lay on a sofa before the still open window, and Rose, half dreading that her hopes



had deceived her, stood by her side. Isidore pressed his benefactress's extended hand to his lips, and turning to Rose, forgot, in that moment's joy, all he had suffered since they parted. For some time each continued silent, but this uncertain period of their being together was too precious to be spent in the mere indulgence of affection. Isidore briefly informed his attentive auditors of the circumstances which had occurred since he left St. Florent, the suspicion under which he had fallen, and his unfortunately joining the assembled peasantry at a moment when not only his good intentions were frustrated, but his personal safety endangered ; and he learnt in return, the particulars of the religious meeting at Le Rance, and the distressing event of Vidal's death.

In the midst of a conversation so in-

teresting, a knock was heard at the door, and Monsieur Brunel, fearful of the entrance of a stranger, hastened to inquire who was there. He soon returned with a note from La Porte ; in this, he stated, that he had just received a summons from the Count de St. Romain, and had been obliged to obey it instantly, as he understood he wished to consult him respecting the proceedings about to be commenced against the disturbers of the public peace. His return he considered uncertain, as he was determined to spare no exertion that might be necessary for the purpose of separating the guilty from the innocent. Though Isidore was grieved at not being able to see his respected friend, he could not but rejoice at the hope of the good his moderation might be able to effect, and resolved, since he was absent, to admit none into the secret of his return, except

his mother; to this Madame Durand made some opposition, but overcome by his entreaties, and the remonstrances of Monsieur Brunel, who affirmed no apprehension should be entertained of the discretion of a parent, when the safety of her child was in question, she consented that the good old man should bring her to the house. When Madeline arrived, her surprise, her joy, and her curiosity, were poured forth in such a confused medley of exclamations and inquiries, that Isidore could with difficulty refrain from smiling, as he perceived that, unable to cope with her velocity, his answers had often the effect of cross-purposes. When her affection, however, had manifested itself sufficiently in smiles, tears, and caresses, the happy dame, with more good sense than sentiment, remarked, that after such a journey, her darling must stand in need

of food, and delightedly set herself to procure it, as the servant maid had fortunately that evening gone to visit her sister, and was not expected home till late.

There was something peculiarly striking to Isidore's mind, in the assiduities and regard of this poor woman, now that he knew the only bond that united them was the artificial one of helplessness on the one side, and kindness on the other. He had heard from Father Bernardine, that she was privy only to as much of his history as was requisite to excite her compassion, and yet how faithfully and fondly had she fulfilled those duties, of which, in general, nothing but the strong ties of nature, and not always those, can ensure the performance! As she now sat with her eyes fixed upon him, uttering exclamations of mingled pride and delight at the improvement evident in his person,

even when concealed under a dress which she declared none but a stage-player or merry-andrew would own, there was something so amusing in her simplicity, that it excited a smile even in the saddest of the party, and the moments passed quickly, if not happily by.

In the mean time, Lebrun and his new acquaintance, together with the train of villagers, engrossed in their own subjects of conversation, proceeded to the Priory. Lebrun found little difficulty in obtaining, on many points, as much information as he required, though, unfortunately, the fate of the Pilgrim was not one of them: it cannot be supposed that Simon's loquacity was lessened by the importance of what he had to communicate; his words, indeed, rolled on like a loaded carriage down a steep hill, where the driver's only difficulty is to keep it in the proper direction;

for, like most persons of lively imagination, he was much given to diverge from the straight line of historical facts. By the time his stock of news was nearly exhausted, they drew near the Priory, and the deep sound of the passing bell rather depressed his vivacity. Simon had a superstitious dread, not only of death, but of the dead, and it was much against his inclination that he performed this act of respect to his master's memory, as he would probably have almost preferred seeing him alive again, to catching a glimpse of his coffin. They at length entered the chapel, where, notwithstanding the solemnity of the scene, little awe seemed to impress the minds of the careless assistants ; who doffed their hats before the altar, touched the holy water, and putting one knee on the ground, repeated their prayers and crossings with as little seri-



ousness as if it were merely a form necessary to the procuring them admission to the spectacle. Yet, amidst the mummary of superstition, there was much to awaken and fix the attention. The full-toned organ pealing forth its deep and solemn dirge, accompanied by the harmonious voices of the choristers—the torches at far distant intervals flaming against the pictured walls of the sacred chapels, while the high altar presented one resplendent blaze of light—the groups of hardy bare-headed peasants leaning against the massy pillars, or kneeling apart with eyes cast down, and lips incessantly moving as they rapidly fingered their rosaries—the friars and attendant priests, some fixed, like statues, the images of dull and dead devotion ; others flinging incense from their silver censers, or sprinkling on the body the water which they vainly deemed could

purify the polluted soul, and, contrasted with this external pomp, the breathless object for whom so many ceremonies were practised, insensible alike to the rites performed for his repose, and to the low-muttered reflections which sometimes escaped from the standers by, who, in their rustic phrase, moralized on the little fruit of so much oppression and crime, presented a lesson to all who could look beyond the outward show. At the high altar stood the Prior, his robes of state thrown by, and covered with a white surplice; on the back of which was represented an immense black cross. Notwithstanding the humbling spectacle before him, there was in his look even more than his usual haughtiness; it seemed as if he despised himself for the part he was acting, and would willingly have given the burial of a dog to him

who, during his life, he had treated as a dog. But policy, that universal tyrant of tyrants as well as slaves, commanded otherwise, and he was compelled to pay respect to the memory of a man whom he pronounced to have fallen in defence of the established faith. The service proceeded, the "*dona eis requiem sempiternam*" was chaunted, and the bearers prepared, as soon as the mass for the dead was performed, to bear the body to its kindred dust, when the Prior, commanding all who were hurrying out of the church-doors to remain, thus addressed them. "Christian people, as your spiritual father, I exhort you, as your temporal lord, I command you, to give ear; you know the mournful cause that has brought us together, a foul murder has been committed, a member of the church, a zealous servant of the king cut off, while em-

ployed in checking the course of rebellion and heresy, which you, whose gray hairs bear witness to the length of your experience, can remember once before desolated this fair province. And must he die unrevenged? Shall the instigators of such a deed be suffered to triumph in the success of their guilt? The voice of power has decreed that they shall not; its decree, resistless as the lightning of heaven, is gone forth; it is for you to assist in its execution: but lest some contumacious wretches should be slack in their zeal, or even criminally shrink from the requirements of duty, let the terrors of justice overawe them. Punishment is denounced against all who shall harbour, abet, or any way assist the traitors. Our most just and upright Governor has promised to hasten hither with his counsel and authority to our relief. Let it be our

part to meet him in his arduous duties, and by ourselves binding and bringing in the delinquents, leave him only the task of inflicting the deserved penalty. Long live the King !”

When he concluded, by his direction, several of the Brothers distributed amongst the crowd copies of a Proclamation, of one of which Lebrun contrived to obtain possession. The purport was to set forth in forcible language the enormity of the insurrection, began at a moment of such profound peace ; offering a reward for the apprehension of any concerned in it, and a larger sum for the person of Isidore Delorme, who was represented as the chief of the faction : it further enacted that the prisoners should be brought to the Priory of St. Roc, where the Intendant of the Province shortly proposed to take up his residence for a time, in order

to be nearer the seat of the disturbances. Whatever might be the thoughts of the others present on reading this paper, Lebrun stayed not to inquire ; it must doubtless have struck those capable of thinking, by the injustice with which it connected the breaking out of a few restless spirits with the murder subsequently committed, and which was by this time well-known to be the deed of an individual already in custody, and the effect of private wrongs. But, like the bundle of darts in the fable, circumstances which are trifling, when considered singly, become important if united together, and this species of incorrect representation often answers the purposes of bad men more effectually than absolute falsehood. While Simon, therefore, was labouring to explain the proclamation to a circle around him, to whose downright simplicity it appeared a need-



less gasconade, Lebrun, glad of an opportunity to escape from his long-winded eloquence, and considering the search after Father Bernardine as of inferior importance, slipped through a side-door, and found himself far on the road to Vallergues before the others had even thought of setting out on their return. He had taken the precaution to receive from Isidore sufficient directions to enable him to find Madame Durand's house, and without hesitation knocked at the door of the room in which the party were assembled. The sound at first alarmed them, but Isidore dissipated their fears, and, informing them it was the friend he had mentioned as expecting, he was quickly admitted. The poor fellow seemed at first so unwilling to disturb their happiness, that it was some time before Isidore could persuade him to deliver up the paper he had brought; it

was no other than he expected, and his first idea was immediately to surrender himself, and dare an examination of his conduct. “Are you mad!” exclaimed Monsieur Brunel and Lebrun at once; “is there any heroism,” continued the pastor, “in a man’s throwing away his life because he has not the patient fortitude necessary to defend it? If justice was not blind, we might trust to her, but unfortunately she is obliged to rely too often on her ministers, and they are counselled by their passions and prejudices. It is absolutely necessary for you to leave this country for a short time; meanwhile this commotion will blow over, truth and reason will be listened to, and I doubt not that you may then return in perfect safety.”

“And must my child leave France as well as Languedoc!” exclaimed the ter-

rified Madeline ; “ how can he live in a strange land with none but strangers about him ? ”

“ My good woman,” said Monsieur Brunel, “ you should not forget that your son is no longer the curly-headed boy whom you never trusted farther than your eye could follow him ; only suffer yourself to imagine it is inclination, and not compulsion, that sends him away from you, and you will not be thus alarmed.” Madeline thought it impossible that any thing short of necessity could tempt him from Vallerargues, and her clamour could not easily be quieted. She had once seen the sea, and her terror on beholding it, even from the firm pier, was all she could now recollect or attend to. To think that her child was destined to brave its treachery and dangers, and alone too, was more than she could endure, and she felt

almost tempted to accompany him, and at least share his hardships; but Lebrun suggested an abler companion in young Gaspard, and proposed engaging his services as soon as they should quit the house. Poor Rosa's heart sunk within her at the thoughts of this sudden separation, on which she had not calculated, but both she and Madame Durand were careful not to oppose what they were convinced was so necessary, and on which the safety of Isidore evidently depended. Nor indeed was there time to remonstrate had had they been so inclined: Lebrun had declared that, consistent with prudence, they could not remain there later than eleven, and there were many things in that short space of time to be arranged; what leisure was there then for the indulgence of those feelings, to which in a calmer moment all might have given way?

Nothing could now be attended to but plans for his journey, and the means to escape, should any danger pursue him. After much discussion it was at length agreed that Isidore should proceed immediately to Cette, and there embark with all possible diligence for Barcelona, as Madame Durand had a relation residing there in some post of eminence, and the shortness of the passage to that port rendered an immediate return to his friends easy whenever it should be judged expedient. While Monsieur Brunel and Lebrun were deeply engaged in reckoning the time it might possibly take to reach this place of safety, Madame Durand drew Isidore aside to give him a letter of introduction to her relation, and took the opportunity to slip into his hand a purse of gold, with a look of kind solicitude that could with difficulty be

resisted. But Isidore, whose spirit shrunk too quickly from the appearance of an obligation, and who inured to hardships, was little anxious about the comforts which money could procure, blushed deeply as he endeavoured to return her liberal gift. "My dear young friend," said Madame Durand, in a low voice, "do not mistake pride for independence; there are circumstances when we may submit to be obliged; there are persons who have the privilege of showing us a trifling kindness without inflicting a wound. Let me hope I am of that number; I do not wish to render this last moment still more sad, but if we never meet again, let me not have to look back on a refusal which would lead me to fear your friendship was not as sincere as I wish to consider it. Do not mourn for me, Isidore," she continued, seeing him look distressed,



should you hear before long of my death ; I feel that the summons cannot tarry ; I should have rejoiced, I own, to see comfort once more restored to my dear brother, and to have been witness to your happiness with poor Rose, but if I do not, I can humbly say it is better it should not be so, and can trust the Almighty disposer of events with those who are precious to me.” The clock below now struck, Rose turning deadly pale could only urge that it must be much too fast ; her agitation every moment became more painful ; the others could speak, could express their regrets, their apprehensions, even their hopes ; but she seemed suspended upon that sound, as if awaiting the conclusion of her happiness from the stroke. “ Voila l’heure ! ” exclaimed Lebrun rising, and tossing down a large glass of wine as he spoke ; “ it is foolish to delay here any

longer." Isidore also rose, endeavouring by a strong effort to master his feelings; his farewell to Madame Durand was scarcely audible, and she returned it by a prayer heard only by him to whom it was addressed; the good Madeline flinging her arms round him, tried by her feeble strength to stop his departure, and rent the air with her acclamations. Rose, afraid of trusting her voice to utter one word, sunk back in her chair, and covered her face to hide her tears, apparently insensible to the expressions of his affection and of his grief; yet when he turned from her to depart, her look of silent sorrow, which seemed to say they should never meet again, pierced to his very heart, and almost dissuaded him from his wiser resolutions. Overcome by her distress, he stood irresolute, not daring to tear himself away, and could scarcely

be persuaded by the firm remonstrances of Monsieur Brunel, to follow his impatient companion : again the clock struck—the door had closed after them—the last footsteps were heard descending, and Rose, who had listened breathless to the sound, uttered a convulsive cry, and threw herself into Madame Durand's arms. Isidore, hurried on by his companion, and scarcely heeding whither they went, reached the inn where their friends were carousing in their absence, and wholly engrossed by his bitter thoughts, suffered Lebrun to draw Gaspard aside, and make every arrangement for their departure. Gaspard was not sorry of this opportunity to see strange lands—to escape from awkward inquiries, and to suspend for a season his usual occupations ; and as he was a citizen of the world, born in obscurity and bred by chance, there was neither

permission from friends to be asked, nor preparation to be made. He wisely supposed Isidore would not travel without money, and seldom cared from whose purse he was supplied so as the supply came. Lebrun promised faithfully to watch over Isidore's interests during his absence, and, if possible, to find out the old Pilgrim, not only to ascertain his safety, but for the purpose of drawing from him fuller information. At his recommendation, Isidore consented to throw himself on a miserable truckle-bed for an hour, but in vain he tried to banish by sleep the remembrance of Rose's grief; nothing so overpowers a man who is not lost to all feeling as the sight of a woman's tears, and if the pain Alexander felt convinced him he was not a god, this equally proves to them that they do not possess the stoicism they often affect. It was

therefore no small relief when Lebrun came to arouse him for their departure ; Gaspard soon appeared ; the host, divided between his fear of losing his reckoning, and vexation at being disturbed at so unusual an hour, gave them a grumbling salutation, and before the first casement was opened in Vallerargues, Isidore had left the place which contained all that was dear to him, and prepared to commence his pilgrimage through a world, where, since its creation, so much sorrow and so much worth have continually wandered. It was well for him that the host was a man inclined to think his own affairs of sufficient importance to occupy all his attention ; one more meddling might have found some impediments to his departure which he could not very easily have removed.

On the very day that Isidore left the

village, Madame Durand was surprised by a visit from her advocate, who had engaged to come himself and converse with the witnesses in her presence ; his arrival at least restrained the sadness to which the whole party were but too much inclined to yield. M— de M— was an honour to a profession which is but often degraded by want of principle in those who practise it : his conduct was accordant with the strictest rules of integrity, and neither threats nor corruption could divert him from the tenor of his upright way. Often on occasions, when timid virtue thought it sufficient not to assist iniquity with the hardihood which great minds alone possess, he had stood forth to oppose it amidst the pity of the lukewarm, the scorn of the base, and the silent applause of those who admired, but dared not imitate his firmness. His ardent soul,



which, had it been employed in evil, might have set kingdoms in a blaze, was the stay of the orphan and the support of the oppressed; the fearful, who would have sunk beneath the frown of tyranny, gathered courage from his presence; and those, who of themselves were too feeble to oppose their rights to the torrent of oppression, stood firm under his protection. Seldom was there a man so hated or so beloved, so censured, or so approved, but, while the approbation of the good served to throw a radiance over the dark path he was sometimes forced to tread, the impotent rage of the bad fell as harmless as the vapour that seems for a moment to dim the radiance of the sun: happy is it that it is not in the page of fiction alone that such a character is to be found!

Long-tried friendship, as well as pro-

fessional skill, had pointed him out to Madame Durand in the present emergency, and with a zeal which interested motives can never excite, he had laboured to serve the Baron de Courcy, and hasten his cause to a conclusion: he was extremely pleased with the conversation and manners both of Monsieur Brunel and Andore, who returned with him immediately to Montpellier, nor was he indifferent to the case of the unhappy Pierre, which was related to him, and still farther impressed on his attention by the disconsolate looks and heart-rending sighs of Jeannette. There seemed, however, but little prospect of his succeeding in saving him, and all he could promise was to obtain access to him for his friends, and, if possible, a mitigation of punishment from the mercy of his judges. During their absence, Louise and Jean-

nette took up their abode with Made-line, and sadly passed this delay without hope—this expectation of almost certain, though slow-coming anguish.

---

## CHAPTER VI.

---

The bitter hour is o'er,  
The man of many sorrows sighs no more!

CRABBE.

---

No sooner had Lebrun dismissed Isidore on his voluntary exile, than he began to prepare according to his promise, for performing the task he had imposed on himself, and sending his companion Francis away, by a suitable change in his appearance, which it was not difficult to one of his versatile habits either to imagine or effect, quickly transformed himself into a joyous care-forgetting roguish member of the begging fraternity, such as, enriched by their very poverty, have too much genius for labour, and too much gaiety for

reflection, who, by a neat stroke of wit or merry tale, obtain the alms which is often denied to real sufferings, and are content to be called lazy scoundrels, so that the compliment be accompanied by a few pieces of copper. The indiscriminate charity of monastic establishments was always a sure hot-bed for this race, and the lay brothers, whose office it was to deal out the daily provision of bread, soup, and benedictions, were much disposed to favour those who brought, in return for their good cheer, some entertainment, to enliven the dull monotony of their lives. It not unfrequently happened, that the outer court of a convent where these distributions took place, witnessed as much mirth as is sometimes supposed to be confined to the precincts of less holy places, and that the ancient walls rang with peals of laughter that might almost

have startled the reverend fathers reposing in their graves. Lebrun, who was a proficient in every species of drollery, and who knew human nature to be everywhere pretty much alike, felt, no doubt, as he retraced the road to the Priory of St. Roc, that he was secure of a welcome for as long as he might think proper to desire it: he was led to take up his abode there for a short time, by a rumour he had heard, which mentioned Father Bernardine's having been known to return to the Priory from Nismes, and the hope of being able to trace him farther by the information he should be able to gather. He arrived just as the bell was ringing for matins, and when the prayers were over, joining the rest of his ragged fraternity, fixed himself, after their example, on the sunny side of the outer wall of the Priory, in eager expectancy of the coming repast.



Each, as the lay brothers advanced, held up a broken pitcher, cup, or hollowed gourd, in clamorous impatience ; Lebrun, who had provided himself with nothing of the kind, when the rest were served, contented himself with opening a huge mouth, in which two rows of strong, though well-worn teeth, stood like armed champions waiting to begin the attack. The lay brother not a little amused at his appearance, begged to know if his moderation were so extreme, that one mouthful would suffice him. “ Please your reverence,” replied Lebrun, “ I was unwilling to set bounds to your charity as my companions have done, by their stint of pot and pint, I wished it to be as inexhaustible as my appetite, and if you will but make the experiment, you shall see that this receptacle has a peculiar quality, the very reverse of Fortunatus’s dish of far-famed

renown, since, fill it as often as you will, you will be sure to find it empty." The brother laughed heartily at the conceit, and letting him drain the bowl of what was left, gave him permission to bring the same measure every time food was dealt out to the poor.

Lebrun took every opportunity of improving his good fortune; brother Laurence was a wit, and loved to find a person upon whom he might cut his jokes, and who would also laugh at them: he quickly made his way, till he was established in the kitchen, and admitted to the honour of messing with the Priorial scullions, whose fare was such as became the dignity of their office. Whatever intelligence found its way, as is usual in great establishments, to the domestic apartments, he was sure to catch up, but though by this means much private scandal, and

many ecclesiastical witticisms enriched the stores of his memory; nothing transpired with respect to the Pilgrim, further than the confirmation of his having been brought thither well guarded, and not being known to depart. If he was confined in the Priory by the tyrannic Superiour, it was entirely unknown to his new companions; they seemed to be pretty accurately acquainted with the contents of the well-filled cellars, and could descant on the merits of the different vintages that so perpetually replenished them; but the dungeons of the house they neither cared nor were permitted to pry into, and at this moment every one's attention was so much engrossed with the expectation of an approaching event, that they had little leisure to bestow on indifferent subjects. This was no other than the arrival of the Intendant of the province;

the noble Count de St. Romain, which took place immediately after, and the preparations for which kept all at the Priory in a state of turmoil and anxiety. Such an unusual spectacle drew together, on the day of his arrival, hundreds of curious spectators, who lined the road to the gates, where the porter, honest Francis, with even more than his wonted importance, and toiling under the weight and stiffness of his state apparel, stood within the iron bars, proud of his superior station, and yet equally devoured with curiosity as his meaner neighbours.

At length the huzzas and vivas commencing at the further extremity of the line, gave notice of the Intendant's approach; the ground seemed to ring under the tread of the horses' hoofs—the dust flew in thick clouds, and the ponderous gates flew open to admit the martial pomp

and liveried attendants of rank and authority. As the carriages rolled under the archway, and the guards drew their sabres which glittered in the beams of a bright setting sun, the Monks, who were moving in slow procession to await the arrival of their august visitor, appeared half inclined to suspend their progress ; the flourish of the trumpeter on his milk-white prancing steed, and decked out in gaily embroidered attire, caused the deep-toned chaunt to die away upon their lips, and the Count, with a good-humoured smile, could not refrain, as he entered the hall, from expressing to one of his officers, some surprise at the contrast between the athletic forms of several of the holy brethren, and the visible alarm which they manifested. The Prior welcomed his guest with the courtesy of a gentleman, and the magnificence of a dignified church-

man; it was now his interest to please, and when that was the case, few men possessed in a higher degree the means of rendering themselves agreeable.

A splendid banquet, to which several of the neighbouring nobility were invited, celebrated the first day of the Count's arrival, and as the company retired, all secretly paid their gracious host the compliment of regretting that so much talent and politeness should be lost in a cloister; the Prior would scarcely have been gratified by the remark, so highly did he rank the profession he had chosen and ably supported. Whatever might be the opinion of others, the Count de St. Romain was not likely to be fascinated by a display of ceremony and splendour to which he only submitted as the unavoidable appendages of his situation in life; it never, however, entered the Prior's mind, that a



man should be simple from choice, or he certainly would have treated his visitor according to the strict intention of the statutes of his order. The Count had been bred to arms ; unlike many of his companions, instead of imitating the luxury of the court in the camp, he carried back with him the simplicity of the latter, when obliged to frequent scenes less congenial to his taste, and in those days of etiquette and ceremonial, the blunt manners of the soldier often made the automats about him stare : but beneath this bluntness, were concealed many valuable qualities which secured the happiness of those under his authority. Clear-sighted in his views, quick in his resolutions, his decisions often appeared to slower capacities, the premature result of impatience and carelessness ; but after going through the regular process which

their slower faculties required, they generally were forced to allow, that he had only taken the short road to the same point which they had at length reached: sometimes, indeed, he might be inclined to cut the gordian knot, but it was when he perceived that sophistry endeavoured to wind its threads round the simple truth, and that he felt it beneath him to follow it through all its deceitful mazes. The innocent were sure of his protection, for they had nothing to disguise, and once convinced himself, he was not inclined to delay acting, till his opinion was sanctioned by general approbation. He had learned, immediately on his arrival in the province, the disturbances which had taken place in one part of his government, and knowing how difficult it is for the accused in such a case not to appear guilty, had employed Monsieur la Porte,

on whom he felt he could rely to make such inquiries as might enable him to judge of the affair correctly, and had commissioned him to bring his report to the Priory. Besides the soi-disant Hermit and Manuel Lafuyade, several other persons had, during this interval, been brought thither for examination, and unwilling to put off a work of justice, he determined, notwithstanding the Prior's recommendation of a day's rest, and the absence of La Porte, on the following morning to begin his duties, and ease as much as possible the fears, not only of the innocent, but of the repentant.

Perceiving how little his opinion on this point was attended to, the Prior passed the night in some perturbation: this summary mode of proceeding suited neither his zeal nor his inclination; it would, he considered, be in the highest degree mortify-

ing, should it be proved that the disaffected spirit which he had so frequently declared raged to a fearful extent, was extinguished before it was scarcely kindled; this he thought could not be the result, if the affair were brought at once before the public council, ere the first feeling of indignation had time to cool: little did he apprehend that a number of men would agree in rejecting an accusation, the establishing of which would afford such an ample field for the display of their acuteness and intelligence; he had also hoped, that the fact, if proved, would have served as a safe means for the getting rid of several of his private enemies, who, according to many admirable examples, might have passed muster in the crowd of suspected persons; but as no expedient for changing the Count's intention at the moment suggested itself, he felt that he

must trust principally for the justification of what he had declared, to the spirit of exaggeration common to all men, and the alarm which the very name of an insurrection is sure to create. In the mean time, the instigator of the whole business gave the Prior little uneasiness ; he might indeed have hesitated at actually imbruing his hands in blood, but he felt no scruple in permitting a man to linger on to death, although he was hastening his end, as certainly as if he had plunged a dagger in his heart. The wretched Father Bernardine, on whom he had tried, in vain, the effect of threats and torture, in order to force him to deliver up the documents, by means of which his nephew was to be made known to the world, was now fast sinking under the accumulated pressure of confinement and pain, and the gnawing recollection of crimes fruitlessly committed

With an imagination far stronger than his judgment, he had rashly engaged in a career which he was not competent to pursue; he had depended on opportunity and solicitation engaging Isidore to yield to the wishes of the men whom he sent him to command, but he, at the same time, omitted to secure his own safety, and was now in the power of one whom he knew to be as inflexible as himself, not only deprived of the means of acting in person, but even of knowing how far he had succeeded by the agency of others, of many, too, on whom he felt it difficult to rely with entire confidence. Slowly rolled on the hours of his captivity; his impatient spirit seemed every moment ready to burst its bonds, and conscience,

That juggling fiend who never spake before,  
But cries, "I warned you," when the deed is o'er,

now compelled him to listen to her up-



braidings ; the delusions of a distempered fancy cleared away, like the deceitful mist which has beguiled the traveller on his way, till he falls from the precipice which it had concealed from his view : he saw, that for the crimes of his younger life, he had ill compensated by the intrigues of later years, and that although we may vary into a hundred paths of evil, not one of them can ever lead to peace. It seemed, too, as if years would not be sufficient to accomplish all he wished to do, and his feeble limbs and gasping breath, too plainly convinced him his hours, nay, perhaps his very minutes were counted. Little relief was to be obtained from the Monks appointed to wait upon him, and bring the food which the Prior provided, in order still to lengthen out his sufferings. As they beheld his emaciated form, his feverish cheek, heavy sunken eye, beam-

ing only the flashes of despair—as they heard his low sepulchral voice, by terms imploring their pity, or deprecating the haste of the angel of death, who appeared even to his mortal sight to hover over him, they could not but be touched, yet, at the same time, they blamed, as criminal, a compassion that was excited by one represented as an enemy to the church, and further than words of counsel and kindness, nothing was to be expected. The bustle occasioned by the arrival of the Intendant had reached even to this abode of misery, and so deeply was Father Bernardine struck with this unexpected event, that it seemed to arrest his soul, just ready to quit its mortal tenement. One fixed desire immediately took possession of his mind, it could not be called a hope, for he had nothing now left to look forward to. Death he knew was at hand,

whatever might be the result, but he shuddered at considering that he should leave the world without performing the only act of justice in his power. The great difficulty lay in prevailing on his rigid attendants to assist in the execution of his plan, and for this he could only trust to the effect of the persuasions of a dying man, which sometimes soften the hardest hearts, make even the most indifferent place themselves for a moment in the situation of him who suffers, and imagine what it must be at such a time to beseech, and beseech in vain ! When they therefore visited him on the following day, taking a hand of each, he solemnly informed them he felt his last hour rapidly approaching, that hour at the thoughts of which even the best men tremble ; what must it then be to him, a man stained with the guilt of so many crimes, exposed to the church's

censures, cut off from all communion with the living, and already, as it were, entombed among the dead; he implored them by their veneration for the blessed Virgin and their hopes of happiness, once more to carry him into the assembly of the faithful, that he might hear again the words of life, and his spirit take her flight amid the prayers and incense of the holy.

The Monks were touched by his request, but its boldness startled them, and for a considerable time they peremptorily refused to consent: the consequences, should their kindness be discovered, alone presented themselves to view; the scandal to the house, the displeasure of the Prior, long overcame their pity; but the unhappy Pilgrim, eager on accomplishing his point, was so urgent in his remonstrances, so eloquent in his appeals, and promised such discretion, that, though

with great reluctance, they at length yielded, warning him to expect no further indulgence, should he now bring them into trouble; perhaps the division between them of a small sum of money he had about his person might assist in removing their objections, but it is difficult to say when men are swayed by several motives, how much power ought to be attributed to each. There was a narrow and disused passage which communicated from the dungeons of the Priory to a retired chapel in the church, which had been separated by iron railings from the rest of the sacred edifice, and appropriated to the use of the prisoners who might occasionally be confined in them: thither that same evening Father Bernardine was conveyed by his two attendants, covered with the dress of the order, and so concealed from observation by a mass of

Gothic pillars, behind which he was laid, that they soon left him to join the brotherhood, entertaining little fear of detection, yet with renewed and strict charges to circumspection, and a promise of returning as soon as the service should be ended. The old man smiled triumphantly as they withdrew; habituated to the gloom of a prison, the glow of the setting sun streaming through the rich colouring of the painted windows, and the blaze of the tapers burning before the different altars, so dazzled his sight, that he could scarcely at first distinguish how he was situated; but, on recovering from this dimness, he perceived that a stranger, who had separated himself from the rest of the household, and withdrew, like him, into the greater obscurity of a side aisle, was, though apparently occupied with his rosary, gazing intently upon him; his first



impulse was to turn from his observation, but recollecting that there was but one man in the world whom he had now reason to fear, he changed his intention, and beckoned him to draw near. The invitation was obeyed, the stranger approached slowly and cautiously to his side, and leaning close to his ear, inquired in a low whisper, if he was not Father Bernardine? "I am," replied the Pilgrim, in the same tone of voice; "what can you want with one so wretched? Are you a friend to the oppressed and an enemy to the oppressor?"

"Yes," replied the stranger, "and one who has for some time been diligently seeking you to obtain information on a subject of much importance; I have that also to tell you which you may perhaps shrink from hearing."

"This is not a moment, my son," said

the Pilgrim, “for communications, nor is there aught now in the world that can move me—I feel that all is lost; but if you are a true man, stand by me; you will see strange things, soon; be not rash, and stir not, unless my enemies prevail and my courage fail me. Hark, they are coming; remove a little farther off, or we may be observed.” As he spoke, the heavy folds of tapestry that hung over the entrance which led from the church to the priory, were held back by a white-robed chorister, and the Prior, having his guest on his right hand, appeared in all the pomp of his sacerdotal dignity, and marched proudly on, as if that holy place was the theatre of his glory. As they moved up the church, the organ poured forth its fullest strain, and on approaching the altar in the chapel of St. Roc, where vespers were to be said, every knee was

bent, every eye turned to the earth, as if unworthy of being raised to the image of their patron. After accompanying the Count to the seat of state prepared for him, the Prior, arraying himself in robes still more magnificent, began with his attendant priests the solemn service. The incense burned, the music and melodious chaunts entranced the soul into all the luxury of imaginary devotion, and the Prior's firm and sonorous voice repeated the prayers and thanksgivings with which his heart was so little in unison ; when, as all were prostrate on their knees, and a solemn pause excited the most careless to attention, a voice was heard so deep and hollow, that each one started up, and looking at his neighbour, seemed to inquire if he had also heeded it, or if it were not intended as a summons to his ear alone. Again the same words were re-

peated—"Justice, my lord, justice! in the name of Him from whom you look for mercy." The angry Prior in vain gazed around to see whence the interruption proceeded; by his orders the chapels were searched, and a violent scuffle quickly directed the attendants to the cause of the disturbance. The terrified monks, who, now too late, accused themselves for their good-natured indulgence to Father Bernardine, suspecting, on hearing his voice, that delirium was preceding the last moments of the dying prisoner, had hastened instantly to where he lay, and were endeavouring to hurry him away, while the stranger, the athletic Lebrun, was still more powerfully contending with them for his stay. "Am I not to be obeyed?" exclaimed the Prior advancing, as he spoke from the gilt-railing that enclosed the steps of the altar: "My lord,"

he continued, addressing the Count, “ I grieve this should occur in your presence, but even our most holy places are not now safe from uproar : the miscreant, however, whoever he may be, shall meet the punishment that he deserves, and learn more decorum.” Meanwhile the Count had left his seat, and making his way through the crowd of officious attendants, determined himself to inquire into the reason of so strange an appeal. Lebrun, anxious that the Pilgrim should obtain a hearing, though ignorant for what precise purpose he sought it, threw himself at the Count’s feet, and was just in time to prevail on him to order that he might be brought forward for examination. He immediately took him in his arms, and trembling, lest life should depart before he could declare his wishes, laid his burden on the altar steps before the enraged

Prior, whose eyes at such an unlooked-for sight flashed with indignation. It was a striking picture, even to those who gathered round as indifferent spectators. The exhausted old man, sinking into the agonies of death, his features convulsed and his dress rent in the struggle, appeared like one of the demoniacally possessed recorded in holy writ, awaiting his deliverance from the touch of a successor of the Apostles, but no apostolic love beamed from the countenance of the haughty priest. Lebrun, kneeling down, supported the Father's head against his bosom, and watching the opening of his lips, seemed as if he would give a meaning to their slightest motion. The monks and attendants formed a circle around with looks of mingled astonishment, curiosity, or indignation; and the benevolent Count, who attended to nothing of what



was passing but the misery of the object before him, was endeavouring to discover by what means it could be alleviated. A few drops of water administered by one of his servants calmed the Pilgrim's agitation for some moments; the Prior vainly counselled that he should be sent to the chambers of the infirmary, the Count was bent upon his remaining; and as, from the evident perturbation of his host, he could gather that he felt an interest in the affair which he was studious to conceal, it is perhaps possible that there was, in addition to his humanity, a desire to unmask a member of a profession towards which he felt but too little respect. Thus they stood for some time silently watching what appeared the last struggle between life and death.

The Priory clock at length struck; it was the first sound that seemed to pene-

trate to the ear of the dying man: with more vigour than they supposed him to possess, he raised his head, and looking wildly about, exclaimed, “ That sound tells me my last hour is come. Noble Sir, listen to me; I must be brief, and do not let yon arch fiend delude you into believing the feeling of my wrongs is madness; if I were mad, I should not suffer as I do, I should not know that I am in the presence of my oppressor, and that ere long we must both appear, ay appear together, crushed and low as I now am, to answer for the deeds that we have done. My lord, that sanctified villain robs the orphan of his due; his nephew still lives, the Baron de Courcy is not yet childless; it was I who preserved his life, but it was not for good; had it been, one blessed ray of comfort would descend upon my soul, and all

there is dark ! I have long foreseen this moment, and provided against it ; if you have generosity, my lord, to do what I hoped to have done, apply immediately to Monsieur Montblanc ; he has papers which I confided to his care sufficient to prove whatever I now adduce.”

“ Stop,” interrupted the Count eagerly, “ is the Monsieur Montblanc you speak of the person often employed by my predecessor, and who is still clerk to our council ?”

“ The same,” said the Pilgrim.

“ Then tell, me,” cried the Count, “ are not you Daniel Gui, formerly so much distinguished in the cause of the Camisards ?”

“ That was my name,” said the Pilgrim, writhing with agony as he spoke, “ yes, that was my name, but it sounds strange to my ears ; I was not then the

outcast you now see me ; the sun shone on me as well as on others, and friends came trooping about me, but I have sinned more than ever man did, and all memory or hope of joy has fled from me, like the torrent dried up by summer's heat from the parched lips of the traveller who seeks it in his hour of need. I have more to say, but I feel the blood move slowly in my veins—chafe my dying limbs, some good Christian, and draw my gown closer round me—it grows very cold ! It is an awful thing to die ! Oh for an hour, such another hour of light and liberty as this. Yet what should I learn but that virtue and religion are not fictions, and how far I have wandered from them ! How could I shut my eyes against truths so clear, against mercy offered even to me, though so vile ! And was it for the sake of indulging passions which now seen so con-

temptible that I was led thus easily astray to my ruin ? This is truth known too late : I cannot be pardoned, for my own conscience condemns me ! Oh mercy ! mercy ! is there yet a door of acceptance open for me ?” As he continued to speak, his voice became gradually fainter ; his eye-balls were fixed and glazed, and clammy dew stood on his wrinkled brow. An officious Priest leaning over him endeavoured to force a crucifix into his clenched hands ; with all his remaining strength he put it from him, and a general groan testified in what light the action was viewed : turning away his head from the crowd, his eye fell on the vindictive countenance of the Prior, displaying all the passions which agitated his breast ; the miserable man uttered a loud shriek and his spirit departed with the cry ! Was it in despair ? This awful

question he was no longer able to answer, and the impenetrable veil was drawn around him, which no mortal eye can penetrate. So rapidly had the whole of this extraordinary scene passed, that all the efforts of the Prior had not been sufficient to interrupt it; nothing now remained but to order the attendant Monks to carry out the body of this impious heretic, and have it thrown into some hole with the beasts that perish and are forgotten. The Count, who wished to reserve any disputes he might have with the church for occasions of more moment, made no other opposition than a charitable remonstrance, which was received with a murmur of indignation, and they proceeded with all the contempt they could testify to fulfil their Superior's orders. Willingly would the Prior have buried in the same grave all memory of



that day's transaction, but it was engraven on too many hearts, and the important looks and mysterious whispers of all, as they withdrew from the church, showed that it could not long want publicity. The remainder of the service was hurried on; at its conclusion the Prior and the Count separated with more than the usual ceremonials, as each was desirous of concealing his thoughts under the thick veil of politeness. The former, on retiring to his own apartment, locked, and double-locked the door: none were ever permitted to witness the violent paroxysms of rage, by which nature often atoned for the restraint that outward decency compelled him to put upon his feelings: the attendants below heard the hurried step as he paced backwards and forwards, and now and then the suppressed scream of impotent passion; but it was the dis-

turbed countenance most plainly spoke what was passing within, and if by chance he perceived his looks reflected from the mirrors that lined the room, he would start back affrighted at the spectacle. After the first ebullition was past, the Prior sat down more calmly, to consider how it would be possible to escape the difficulties which seemed to surround him. He recollected, with a faint gleam of satisfaction, that Father Bernardine had not once named the object for whom he wished to excite the Count's interest, that the latter was too much engaged to attend to the affair immediately, and that it might be hoped, that amidst his more important avocations, he would not very deeply consider the concerns of an unfriended orphan. His own suspicions, which had been very strongly awakened, now fell, more decidedly than ever, on the young peasant

who had engrossed so much of the Pilgrim's care, and provoked with himself for not having made more strenuous efforts for securing him earlier, he bent all his thoughts to the best means of discovering his retreat, and getting him even now into his power. What was next to follow, he had not determined, but his reputation was at all hazards to be secured; he felt it was a momentous period in his life, and with a dangerous expediency promised to atone by a more holy and correct demeanour, when it should be safely passed over, for whatever deeds of violence he might now consider himself forced to have recourse to. There was, for his present purpose, no time to be lost, and the Prior accordingly left his apartment, with the intention of sending privately for old Madeline, and either terrifying or persuading her into revealing the place of her

foster-son's concealment. But he was soon induced to change this plan of proceeding, and to adopt one which seemed to promise more certain success, the particulars of which shall hereafter be detailed.



## CHAPTER VII.

The glassy ocean hush'd forgets to roar,  
But trembling murmurs to the sandy shore.—

\* \* \* \* \*

Now radiant vesper leads the starry train,  
And night slow draws her veil on land and main.

FALCONER.

BEFORE, however, pursuing the reverend Prior in his schemes, we must accompany Isidore on his journey, and briefly passing over the gloom which, during the first leagues, saddened his spirits, and which Gaspard vainly endeavoured to dispel, follow him to Montpellier, where they arrived the following day, and where the novelty of the scene, and the restraint of a crowded and busy city, forced him, at

least outwardly, to a greater degree of cheerfulness. They stopped at the house of a second-rate restaurateur, near L'Ai-giullerie, to take some refreshment, and it was not without emotion, that Isidore, as he silently partook of the fare placed before him, listened to the conversation of the various guests, who dropped in one by one to their accustomed meal, and which generally turned either on the impending trial that was to decide the fortune of the family of De Courcy, or the murder of the Consul of Vallerargues, for which offence the assassin was then confined in the prison of that city. Isidore felt unreasonably disgusted at the indifference with which these affairs were treated; he had perhaps himself been as careless to the lives and fortunes of others, but we never properly estimate events, till they come home to ourselves, and



even then self-love is as ready to exaggerate their importance, as to detract from it, in cases where our own interest is not concerned. He quickly left the company, and, guided by the information of an old woman who was selling rosaries and chaplets at the corner of the street, directed his steps towards the prison, whose lofty walls, facing the Boulevards, gave a mournful, though secure appearance to this house of woe. The sentinels were pacing up and down upon the platform, or stretched along the top of the wall, looked carelessly down upon the various groups that passed them far below. Isidore, notwithstanding the entreaties of his companion, who sagaciously remonstrated against the folly of running into the very place they were seeking to avoid, entered the court, when a soldier extending his musket before him, stopped

his progress, and inquired whom he wished to see. Isidore replied, he came from the friends of a young man who was then confined for murder: "Have you an order?" said the sentry. "No!" replied Isidore. "Then," said the soldier, "you may face about, for you can pass no farther."

"And are the wretched," exclaimed Isidore, as he withdrew, "obliged to undergo the aggravation of solitary, friendless misery?"

"We are not obliged," replied the sentinel who overheard him, "to answer for all the vagabonds outside the walls as well as inside, so you had better go and romance elsewhere, young man."

Finding his endeavours vain, Isidore proceeded to the Peyrou, in the hope that a few moments spent there might alleviate the sadness which on so many accounts pressed on his heart. As he ascended

the massy stone steps, his admiration and wonder every moment increased. How beautiful was the scene that now lay before him ! In front the lofty snow-capt Pyrenees, scarcely distinguishable from the firmament against which they appeared to rest, bounded the view ; on the one side were the deep-blue waves of the Mediterranean, on which a small white sail was sometimes seen scudding swiftly along, and which, insignificant as it appeared in the distance, was perhaps the object of hope or fear to many an anxious breast : still nearer lay the salt-ponds, divided from the sea by narrow strips of yellow sand, and the rich champaign country, from whence the vineyards of Frontignan supply their far-famed wines ; on the other side, the varied and picturesque range of his loved Cevennes stretched along the horizon, while on the hill behind, the city of Mont-

pellier reared aloft its noble towers and stately edifices, the steep ranges of sloping roofs mingling into one mass of firm and not ignoble architecture. Extending round in every direction, lay the "garden of the South," a plain diversified by every charm of nature interspersed with smiling cottages, villas, and gardens, while here and there tufts of the tall cypress reared their dark and spiral forms, recalling to the mind all the luxuriant images of eastern scenery. Across this plain, a lofty aqueduct spread its long majestic line of arches, and the water which it bore to the city formed a transparent basin on the Peyrou, protected from the weather by an elegant temple. But how tame would even such a prospect have appeared, divested of that "purple light of love," that glow of southern climes which threw its rich colouring o'er all around, and by its magic

tint, which the enthusiasm of the poet and the painter fail alike in conveying to the distant eye, clothed the most indifferent objects with resplendent beauty. Leaning on the carved balustrade, whilst his eye wandered idly over the wide expanse, and lost in the pleasures of undefined meditation, Isidore would have remained forgetful of the hours that passed, and of the reasons which hurried him on, had not the well-known sound of the angelus, rung from every tower of the city, reminded Gaspard of the flight of time, as well as of the distance they had to travel, and with much difficulty he succeeded in arousing him from his reverie. Late as it was, they pursued their way resolutely to Cette; the road was good, and as at that time a considerable traffic rendered this little port a place of much resort, they frequently met with company and

conveyances to relieve the tedium of the way.

The country was in general wild and rocky, the ground covered with tufts of lavender and thyme, on which flocks of small sheep were feeding, but the jessamine, almond, and pomegranate-trees with which the hedges along the road were formed, had lost their spring-tide beauty, and as they drew near the salt-ponds, an appearance of desolation was everywhere visible; immense pyramids of salt, like heaps of snow unmelted by the heat of an autumnal sun, were the only objects that relieved the uniformity, except that where the lazy waters of the ponds reached their barren and level banks, a few crazy boats, lying dry on the shore, had been left by their hardy owners against the next day's toil. After passing the causeway by which they are crossed,



they approached the town of Cette, and admired, by the light of thousand twinkling stars, a sea-view that has even inspired the pencil of Vernet. The first sight of the far-rolling billows of the deep cannot be enjoyed without deep emotion: some consider it with apprehension, their admiration is lost in the thought of its immensity and their own insignificance; others, and Isidore was of the number, feel their souls expand, as a scene at once so sublime, and yet so simple, opens upon their view; new faculties seem to awaken to receive the new idea, and the mind, which is too apt to be distracted and weakened by the multiplicity of insignificant objects continually presented to it, finds there a subject capable of occupying at once all its powers. If, in the busy hum of cities, we too often lose sight of the unseen world to which we are hastening

in the solemn view of the ocean, we may lose sight of the trifles of time ; the noise of its never-ceasing waves seems like the voice of eternity, and is heard above the passions and the tumult of this restless world. That free element bears no stamp of man's dominion, no marks of that career which is too frequently traced by desolation ; there, but *one* commanding voice was ever heard, and was in an instant obeyed ; the rush of mighty waters mocks the arrogance of those puny tyrants, at whose slightest accents the slaves of the earth crouch and tremble ! Although it was late when they arrived at C  tte, Isidore strolled down the quay, which was still crowded with idlers. The steady blaze of the watch-tower already threw its long and trembling line of fire upon the rippling waves, and lights glimmered from the numerous vessels stationed in

the harbour, or borne swiftly along in the little boats that were still plying, seemed to dance like fairy tapers over the bosom of the deep.

It was the moment when the fishermen, whose venturous course had, during a two days' absence, carried them nearly to the coasts of Spain, returned with their varied booty. As they furled their dark sails, and neared their little fleet to their respective buoys, the joyous songs of the fishermen and the loud greetings from many a rough voice on their passing through the ships at anchor, drew a motley assemblage to the harbour. Their wives and children flew with fond impatience to welcome their return; the female retailers of the finny spoil, clamouring with proverbial vehemence at the delay they had experienced, each rushing forward to claim a share, and deposit it

on the back of the patient long-eared drudge that was doomed that night not only to bear its accustomed burden, but the reiterated blows with which his owner vented her anger at having to undertake so unseasonable a journey. The strange confusion of cries—the attempt on the part of some petty officers of justice to enforce order—the jests, coarse and rude, but received with unextinguishable bursts of laughter—the various costumes of the seafaring men, whom one principle had drawn thither from every civilized nation, seen by the dim light of a few lanterns, which, placed where the still glittering fish were thrown down in heaps, had each attracted a separate group, leaving the intermediate spaces in twofold darkness, altogether presented a scene which could not but excite the attention of a stranger, however disgusting it might be in its details; nor

were there wanting the perfumes peculiar to a sea-port, and the overpowering whiffs from many a pipe, German, Russ, Dutch, Armenian, Spanish, blown from the tubes of these different people. Isidore, who had inadvertently found himself involved in this vortex while returning from a ramble round the low rocks that lay beneath Fort St. Pierre, was glad to hurry away, and stopped not till the chorus of harsh sounds came only like a distant murmur to his ear. He had secured a lodging in the least frequented part of this small town, and on again reaching it, was not sorry to find that Gaspard had already made himself welcome in the house, had nursed the baby, played with the elder children, drawn water for the mistress, and, in short, excited those feelings of kindness which goodnature is so sure of calling forth. The master of

the house was a coöper; this was a lucrative employment in a place where, from the extent of the wine trade, his art was in constant requisition, and there was an appearance of plenty about his dwelling that showed he was not considered as without skill in his profession. He was a man of about fifty, wore a short curled brown wig, and, though remarkable for habitual taciturnity, frequently gave a significant smile or nod that led people to suppose he could have spoken much to the purpose, if he had not thought it most prudent to be silent. His wife was good-humoured and young, reverencing rather than loving her helpmate, and trained to such a degree of conjugal submission as would have satisfied the most strenuous asserters of a husband's rightful superiority. The supper was excellent; they were of that sensible class which, espe-



cially in France, has not lessened its power of enjoying all the comforts of life by aiming at its elegancies ; and though the table-linen was not the fairest, a display of silver forks and spoons sufficiently testified the wealth of the owners. After supper, a large bible, strongly braced with brazen clasps, was produced, and the cooper fixing his broad-brimmed hat more immoveably on his head, and adjusting his iron-rimmed spectacles (which, from the want of the usual accompaniment of handles, might otherwise have deserted their post) proceeded to read in a monotonous and elevated voice a portion of the sacred volume, and next, in tones that bade defiance to every rule of melody, sang a psalm, which, with a short prayer, concluded the service. It may perhaps appear invidious to remark, that little devotion graced the exercise ; it was sufficient

to mark the host for a protestant against the superstitious errors of the Church of Rome; whether he ever considered it might at the same time answer a more important end, he probably never endeavoured to ascertain. Before they retired to rest, Isidore, with some anxiety, made the usual inquiries respecting the wind, and the probability of a vessel sailing speedily for Barcelona. The cooper answered him laconically, and, contrary to the usual custom of his countrymen, asked no questions. This prudent man dealt much in maxims, and one of them was, that "ignorance of another's affairs can never bring you into trouble, but a knowledge of them may;" and some who were, however, unable to follow his example, imagined they had discovered the secret of his prosperity in this happy want of curiosity. Isidore was therefore forced to remain content

with the information, that there was no speaking with certainty, as the wind might change in the night, and indeed so he found it. Towards morning, the sudden rushing of the wind, and the roar of the breakers, awoke him with the apprehension of a storm ; squalls, accompanied by showers, had changed the face of the deep, and threatened foul weather. There was no hope of sailing that day, and the old seamen prognosticated a continuance of the wind that was most contrary to his purpose.

In this situation, Isidore was forced to endure all the tedium felt by those who have no other business in a sea-port than to leave it, and who find that to do this is impossible. His hours were spent in loitering along the beach or the far-stretching pier, while his only employment was watching the picturesque appearance of

the sailors, who were busily employed in lading their vessels to hasten their departure, or in casual inquiries respecting the far-distant homes they so much desired to see. The swarthy African here encountered the golden-haired Dane, and gazed with wonder at his blue eyes and golden locks; the Turk contrasted the pomp of his flowing garment with the tight dress of the British sailor-boy, and as he watched him with astonished eye mount, like the squirrel, up the giddy mast, for once confessed that his dress might be improved. Yet a supercilious air of superiority sat on every countenance, founded upon ignorance and vanity, and even the bond of commerce seemed unable cordially to unite those whom she had thus heterogeneously assembled. Often too he seated himself on the summit of the hill that rose abruptly

behind the town, and his admiring eye roamed over the wide expanse around: beneath, in long steep terraces, lay the luxurious vines, nearly ready for the hand of the vintager; beyond these, the neat town, its crowded port light-house and busy quays; the sea sometimes dark and frowning, at others dazzling like a liquid mirror, or streaked with the white foam of the waves, and dashing in impotent fury against the deep red rocks; ships with crowded canvass were hurrying into the shelter of the port, or pursuing their destined way with far different degrees of speed, as the gale either filled or deserted their sails. At some distance towards the right, on an island in a deep-receding bay, lay the mouldering ruins of the cathedral of Maguelone, the melancholy remains of former grandeur, where is still pointed out the tomb of

Pierre de Provence, his child, and lovely bride. It was a time of war, and the forts and citadel were gay with military movement and splendour, while the inspiring sounds of martial music mingled with the loud rushing of the wind. Here Isidore indulged in those recollections of home and of the friends who make home dear, which rendered the thoughts of the exile he was about to enter upon more painful, and fortune seemed to favour this natural desire of lingering. The weather became more unpropitious, and the difficulty of reaching Barcelona greater. A vessel was indeed ready to sail, the captain willing to take passengers, but as he was not flying for his life, he thought it best to weather the storm at the house of the widow of a Spanish Hidalgo, who was particularly rejoiced to welcome any of her countrymen, and Isidore had not the



means, even if he had had the imprudence, to bribe him sufficiently to depart from this resolution."

While the time passed thus slowly on, he was one afternoon sitting in the apartment, at once parlour and kitchen, behind the cooper's shop, apparently engaged in reading a volume of old Provençal romances, though in reality his eye wandered over the quaint antique characters without catching a single idea, and the hostess, humming a lullaby to her baby, was at the same time busied in her domestic avocations, when he was roused by a conversation between the cooper and an old friend of his, who had just sauntered into the shop, after having walked out from Montpellier. They had not been long together before Isidore, amidst the intermittent strokes of his host's well-applied hammer, caught the

name of De Courcy, and on listening with more attention, learnt amongst the other news of the day, that the cause respecting the Baron's marriage had been decided. "And what was the result?" inquired the cooper.

"Why, what few, I believe, expected," replied his friend; "we are so used to think whatever has long been must be right, that I verily believe, if they had put us to walk on our hands and feet for some time, we should scruple to stand upright."

"Very likely," coolly remarked the cooper; "is that a case in point?"

"'Tis as you may take it," rejoined his friend. "Yes," he added, lowering his voice, "we have been oppressed so long that it surprises us at last to be treated like men. There was this noble Baron married in the sight of God to a fair and virtuous lady, and you hear half the world

cry out that the church and state will be turned topsy-turvy, because, after her death, the church cannot untie what it never tied."

"Indeed!" cried the cooper.

"Yes, as true as that you're there," replied his friend; "I was in the court all yesterday by particular favour of one of the door-keepers, who is a bit of a politician as well as myself. It was a fine sight; the judges in their long robes, looking too wise to speak; then the merry-hearted, light-tongued lawyers, whose words came out as fast as the flour from my boulting-mill, whether to the purpose or not all the same to them, so as they have their speech; and the javelin-men and guards to keep peace amongst them I suppose; I am sure it was sometimes wanted as much as at any fair or market: first, where you may now be, sat the witnesses;

the old pastor, who married the Baron, a saint of a man by his looks, and some others who could swear to having been present at the ceremony. When M— de M— got up to speak, you might have heard a pin drop; they all looked at him with open mouths, as if they'd have swallowed the clever things he was going to say. I did not understand above one half of them, but I saw many blinking and winking to keep the tears from their eyes, and I must say I was not so hard-hearted but I had to wipe mine once or twice. It was so moving to hear him tell of the misery of the poor Baron, should the sentence of the law throw disgrace on one whose fame was purer than the mountain-snow. I couldn't help thinking, however, that he was wrong there, and that he should have said, it was rather like a fair crystal, from which you can wipe off the

spots that may be thrown upon it ; but I suppose he had his reasons, and it mightn't have been so civil to say he didn't care a fig for the worst they could say against her."

" And did you leave them crying ?" inquired the cooper.

No no ; I staid it all out," said his friend, " listened to the pro's and con's, and the upshot of the whole was, that since they were married, they were married without leave of pope or priest, and that the brother of the lady had no right to take the property away from her lawful husband. When he heard the sentence, M—de M— got up and said, " I thank you, my lords, in the name of my client for your justice ; not that we expected less from a tribunal governed by the high principles of honour and equity, or wished for more : it would be an impeachment of

your character, were I too lavish in my gratitude, since the administrators of an equitable government cannot overstep the law in behalf of one subject without robbing another of his rights." There was a loud shout when he sat down, and the people who stood waiting without shouted still louder; poor creatures, they hardly knew why, but that their confessors will tell them when they make them do penance for it."

"And so the Baron de Courcy is to be restored to his wife's property," said the cooper, after a pause; "a good piece of news for his well-wishers."

"And who are they, think you?" replied his friend?

"Why, I should think all who hope to to get any thing by him," said the cooper.

"Fie upon them, my dear," interrupted the wife, who had ceased her lullaby as



the narrator's voice became louder, and now stood in the door-way, "fie upon them, if they have no other motive for rejoicing; you may set me down for one, though I know nothing of the poor gentleman, but his misfortunes."

"Then," replied her husband, holding, as he spoke, his hammer suspended over the wide-gaping cask, "I may set you down for a fool, as I have often had occasion to do before; a man who has nothing but his sorrows to recommend him, is like one who begs me to let him into my house, because he has the plague: sorrow and poverty are catching disorders, and there should be pest-houses built for them: not that I have any ill will against the family of De Courcy, but we should never be too hasty in our opinions. Besides, I am not quite so sure, that the parliament, after having done him this one good

turn, will be able to get him the cash; we know what the clergy are, they have not their strong boxes for nothing, and it might puzzle the wisest to get away what they choose to hold fast."

"And I am sure," cried his wife, "I should think they might keep the money, so as they would give me back my good character."

"A woman who thinks is sure to think wrong," exclaimed her husband: "women should *never* think, at least, not till they know the value of crowns, livres, and pence," and letting fall his hammer with a determined stroke, he put an end to further discussion. His visitor, turning the tobacco in his pipe, thought him a strange foe to friendly discourse, and his wife, accustomed to his humour, retired, to reflect upon the comparative value of honour and wealth, and to thank her stars

she was too mean an object for her domestic slavery to be made the subject of public scrutiny.

The circumstances, thus related in homely style, were however correct. Notwithstanding the opposition of some, and the outcries of others, the parliament had decided the affair before them, as legislators and as men, and laying all prejudice aside, recognised the validity of the certificate drawn by the protestant minister. In consequence of this, Monsieur de M. had lost no time in informing all the parties concerned of the event, and the messenger who carried the intelligence to Vallerargues and the Priory, reached the latter place in time, to confirm the Prior in all his resolutions. Madame Durand, though grateful to the disposer of human events for such a result, yet could not, as she wrote to the Baron

an account of this happy change in his prospects, forbear a sigh at a recollection of the little value of wealth to one who had none to inherit it, and would willingly have given half the fortune thus recovered, for the hope of again embracing his child. Meanwhile Isidore, the person perhaps most deeply interested in this intelligence, sat for some time silent, overpowered by feelings into which no one present could fully enter. His kind-hearted hostess, seeing him hastily throw down his book, apprehended he was ill, and officiously offered him all the simple remedies at hand, but pretending that the close air of the room affected his head, he hastily seized his hat, and rushing through the shop, proceeded to climb with rapid strides, to his favourite seat near the citadel, in the hope that fresh air would dissipate the oppression he felt. It was

a day of gloom, the wind had abated, but as it blew from the south, over a vast expanse of water, it felt relaxing to the frame ; the thick gray clouds were low, and seldom broken by a transient gleam of brightness, and as the sun sank to rest, even his setting glories were but faintly seen through an almost impervious veil. Every thing appeared drooping, and the sea-fowl, as they flew slowly by, seemed to wave their wings with difficulty in the heavy atmosphere. Isidore, from the summit of the hill, watched the streaming lights that one by one appeared from many a window in the town below him, and his thoughts turned to the account he had just heard, with a mixture of strange sensations, from which he vainly endeavoured to exclude selfish considerations. He was rejoiced at the success of a father, whom as yet he presumed not to love ; he was

rejoiced, too, that Madame Durand should experience this accomplishment of her hopes, after enduring so many trials, but still he felt that the brightness of their prospect only rendered his exclusion more painful, and he was almost tempted to wish Father Bernardine had concealed from him a knowledge which seemed only calculated to disturb his peace. He was now about to leave his native land for an uncertain period; at his return, all the affairs in which he was so peculiarly concerned might be arranged, Madame Durand might have left the country, and no hope of asserting his rights remain; for who would then give credit to his tale? The self-consciousness, which he had once fondly believed would have been a secret consolation, now appeared as an additional torment; how seldom are our opinions the same in the hour of despondency, as in



that of new-born hope? To these considerations, were also added secret reproaches, and he bitterly blamed himself for want of sensibility towards a parent who had suffered so much and so long ; but the tie of natural affection was as yet too weak to subsist without the interchange of kindness on the one hand, and gratitude on the other ; he longed to know him, yet he could not but feel they were at present strangers, and that personal intercourse alone could remove this barrier. Had the Baron continued in affliction, he felt he could more readily have sympathized with him ; we share unasked the sorrows of our fellow-creatures, but we shrink from introducing uninvited into their joys, so conscious are we that prosperity narrows the heart, and renders it insensible to the feelings of inferiors. Pride, which tarnishes the virtues even

of the best, made him retire from the possible rejection of a young peasant, who should presume to claim a portion of the Baron de Courcy's wealth, and the misleading principle was on the point of plunging him into certain misery, to avoid the dread of an affront. At one moment he resolved to return to Vallerargues, relate his history to Madame Durand, and withdrawing immediately from all possibility of discovery, appear no more till he should be able to learn that his veracity was relied on: at another, he was ready to embark in the first vessel that should sail, and effacing from his mind all memory of the past, commence from that moment a new and more independent existence. But there was one object that retained its power over his mind amidst all its vacillations, one golden chain that restrained him from rushing too far into

a career that must have ended in repentance—

Chi dice mal d'amor  
Dice unfalsita.

How often does it prove the charm that calms the disturbed heart, and checks that rashness which would hurry man to his ruin ! In the midst of his determinations that, betide what might, he would take no step that should eventually separate him from Rose ; Isidore heard the name he had assumed repeated several times, and a person approached, whom amid the darkness of night which was gradually gathering round, he with some difficulty perceived to be Gaspard.

“It’s well,” exclaimed the almost breathless mountaineer, “that I have a better scent and lighter foot than some others, or those who are looking for you also, would have found you first.”

“ Looking for me ?” cried Isidore, rather alarmed.”

“ Yes, for both of us, I suppose,” said Gaspard : “ I have only a minute to tell my story : after you left the house, old honesty shut up shop, and stepped out to take his usual walk, which another man would have dispensed with on an evening like this, but regularity I find of use sometimes, though I often say the contrary. He had not been gone long, when he came back, his very wig standing an end with fear, and taking me into the back-kitchen, told me, with as much caution as if the officers of justice were at his heels, that he had heard a stranger inquiring for us, by description, it seems, and a pretty one he gave, none but old sober-sides could have imagined it was intended for a well-fashioned pair of young men such as you and I. He didn’t pre-

sume to ask the hypocritical knave if we had reason for being apprehensive of such inquiries, but very civilly begged we would change our quarters, for he dreads a bustle, he assures me, as much as some people delight in it. Knowing my man, I blustered and protested I would inform you of his unmannerly conduct: he begged I would do so, and giving me our bundle, without even asking for his money, fairly put me out into the street, and I heard the bolts drawn, and bars fixed after me, as if he thought we had intended to force a re-admittance. What's to be done?—this, is no very comfortable lodging for the night.”

“Done!” said Isidore, “why follow me, we have engaged our passage, we will row instantly to the vessel, the captain promised to sail with the turn of the tide to-morrow morning, and we can make

a hundred excuses for going on board over night: our passports are safe in my pocket."

"Well arranged," replied his companion, "the dogs will hardly take to the water after us."

They accordingly descended rapidly the steepest declivity of the hill, and passing outside the town, proceeded immediately to the quay, where there were only a few of the fishermen busily employed in preparing their tackle for the next day's expedition.

"A boat, a boat!" cried Isidore.

"What, my young masters," exclaimed an old fisherman, "are you for a party of pleasure just now; an odd time it seems to me, when the fog is rising so fast that we can hardly see stem from stern, and the moon looks as bright as a farthing candle in a horn-lanthorn; you must find younger fools to take you."



“ But,” said Isidore, “ we are going on board the San Michel, which sails with the first tide, we must put off without delay, so if you don’t choose to earn a crown, another will.”

“ A crown, do you say,” exclaimed the old fisherman, laying hold of him, “ for taking you out no farther than the lighthouse ? Why, I don’t care if I do venture, money is not always so flush,—here, boy, heave a hand, take that net to my old dame, and tell her, if there’s a brack in it that would let a sprat through when I come back, she shall have that will teach her how to work again without spectacles.”

His companions hearing of the bargain, now came forward, each eager to appropriate to himself so handsome a reward, but Isidore and Gaspard springing into the boat, the latter, almost by force, pulled the old man after them, much to the discomfiture of his stiffened limbs ; rendered

more helpless by the young mountaineer's impatience, he was slowly endeavouring to undo the cable that fastened the boat, and at the same time holding down the oars which his more vigorous companions attempted to seize, when a fresh party arrived on the quay, and they could plainly hear the same inquiries repeated which had so much alarmed the cooper.

"Cut your cable," cried Gaspard, "do you mean to keep it for a rope to hang yourself with? There are plenty that will serve for so good a purpose: a sharp steel is the only thing of use in the dark;" so saying, he drew his knife across it, and giving Isidore one oar, while he himself began to row briskly with the other, pushed off, as the people on shore had turned the attention of the stranger to the boat that was rapidly disappearing in the fog.

"It is him, I'd lay my life its him," said the stranger, on hearing the quick

splashing of the oars, “ will no one follow ? No one stop them ? ” Isidore rested his uplifted oar. “ Surely I know that voice, Gaspard, can it be, or am I deceived by my wishes ? ”

“ Why, I should think as you do,” replied Gaspard, “ only I know the man well, and he hates water as much as any cat.”

“ Never mind, let us turn back,” said Isidore, “ for if it is Lebrun, as I imagine, he must have some important, if not good news to communicate to us.”

The order was obeyed ; the old fisherman, sorely repenting his folly for adventuring himself with two such wild madcaps, was not sorry to return, and no sooner had they approached sufficiently near to be recognised, than they perceived their supposition was correct, and it was indeed Lebrun who had thus unexpectedly arrested their departure.

## CHAPTER VIII.

---

Has this fellow no feeling of his business—  
He sings at grave-digging ?

---

*Hamlet.*

WITH the utmost impatience the young men leapt on shore as the boat drew near the quay, notwithstanding the efforts of their boatman, who, though in imminent danger from his vehemence, had seized Isidore's cloak, loudly vociferating, that as he had shown himself ready to fulfil his part of the agreement, they should not fail in theirs, and mumbling something of the cost of a new rope, Isidore threw him double the promised recompence, and without allowing himself to ask a single question while surrounded by a crowd of

idle listeners, followed Lebrun to the inn. No sooner were the trio seated in a private room, than he satisfied their curiosity respecting the cause of his unexpected appearance, and for this purpose recapitulated the events which took place at the Priory after their departure from Vallergues, with many of which the reader is already well acquainted, and the remainder it is now necessary also briefly to relate.

Amongst the numerous train of menials at the Priory, the person who was most frequently employed by the Prior in his secret errands, was an under gardener, a man of slender parts, less principle, and much cunning, who had found out that the best way of rising in the world was to do as he was desired, to ask no questions, and make no remarks. In a community where intrigues are supposed

not to be unfrequent, such a valuable automaton could not but be patronised, and he had silently gained the good-will of the superiors as well as their inferiors. It was with the intention of finding this man at his usual post, that the Prior had left his apartment, and traversed unnoticed the cloisters, which led to a back-gate of the spacious gardens belonging to this magnificent establishment. A small grove of yew and cypress had been planted near this spot, and concealed the unadorned graves of such of the brethren as having died in the commission of unabsolved sin, were forbidden to lie in holy ground. So immaculate, however, was the society become of late, or with so lenient a hand did the superiors use their power, that none then alive remembered its sod having been disturbed for this purpose, and it was seldom frequented



except by Benoit, the person of whom we have been speaking, and who was allowed to keep his tools in a small shed that opened upon it. The Prior cautiously undid the gate ; this place excited no pleasant sensations, and hearing the voice of some one singing in a loud voice, he ventured to call Benoit, that he might ascertain his being there before he discovered himself. Benoit returned no answer, and yet the singing continued, and a light streaming through the trees, proved the enclosure was not unoccupied. Curiosity now induced the Prior to advance so far forward, that it was impossible to retreat unseen, and to his great surprise, he perceived by means of a lamp that hung in one of the cypresses, a stranger, apparently employed in digging a grave, and by the side of it there lay the body that was to fill this last and

narrow home. The rustling of the leaves excited also the attention of the stranger ; he raised his head, and discovering some marks of sacerdotal dignity on the person of the Prior, the spade fell from his hands, and he looked round in vain for a way to escape, while the latter, concealing his alarm under the semblance of severity, peremptorily commanded him to remain, and explain the cause of so strange an employment at such an hour. ‘ Please your Reverence,’ said the stranger, ‘ all hours are alike for my work, and the sooner we get rid of a nuisance the better ; but had I thought to be caught in this out-of-the-way place, I’d have left the job to those whose business it is to do it.’

“ ‘ And what is your job ?’ said the Prior.

“ ‘ Why only cheating the crows of a meal, my lord,’ replied the stranger ;

‘ though you may see they’d have made but a poor one of such a miserable skeleton as this.’

“ ‘ No, no,’ answered the Prior ; ‘ I have no wish to see, but how could you think of singing at such work ?’

“ ‘ It was a requiem, my lord,’ said the man, archly, “ that I was chaunting to dissipate my melancholy.’

“ ‘ Rather a jig,’ replied the Prior, ‘ to enliven you at your task, as I should judge by the liveliness of the strain.’

“ ‘ Why in truth, your Reverence,’ said the stranger, ‘ I did feel as if I wanted a little cheering, for the dead are awkward company at best, especially too when you consider in what a manner this poor creature died.’

“ ‘ What do you mean, fellow,’ said the Prior ; ‘ what poor wretch have you there.’

“ ‘ Poor and wretched enough in all con-

science,' replied the grave-digger, and as he spoke he pulled down the cloth that covered the face, and discovered to the Prior's view the features of Father Bernardine, fixed as marble by the cold hand of death, and stern, as if he were yet capable of feeling the indignation that would be naturally excited by the presence of his murderer. The Prior involuntarily started; unable to withdraw from the fearful sight, he seemed to gaze with even more than common intentness, while his stiffened limbs refused to leave the spot, and the words he was about to utter died away on his lips. The stranger looked at him for a short time, half in scorn, half in surprise, and then, with affected indifference, continued, 'It's an awful corpse I must say; amongst the many I have seen none ever matched it for the wrathfulness of its look: no penitence there, I fear; but as

your Reverence seems averse to my being the sexton, I'd best step and call some of the lay brothers ; I'm sure they'd never have forced the job on me, and given me a silver piece for my pains, if they had known it was so displeasing to you.'

“ ‘ Stir not for your life,’ cried the agitated Prior, accompanying his words with a pressure on the man's shoulders that almost weighed him down, ‘ finish your task—those lazy scoundrels shall be properly rewarded for their tricks : let me but see the earth over him while I stand here !’ The man proceeded with his employment as desired, yet stealing from time to time a look at the Prior, who vainly endeavoured by turning away his head, to avoid the scrutiny. It seemed as if a spell fixed his gaze on the object he most wished banished from his remembrance ; nay, as the stranger's nervous

arms lifted the body into its cold bed, the old man's gray hairs swept against his robe, and the touch was felt in every fibre of his heart. As it gradually disappeared under the rising mound, the Prior had more leisure to survey the ragged object who was toiling before him, and of whose features he seemed to have some slight recollection, though unable to remember where he had seen him. 'What is your name?' he at length said: 'you are not I believe quite a stranger here.'

"Lebrun," replied the man, bowing low as he spoke.

"I have surely seen you before," said the Prior.

"Your Reverence must know best," replied Lebrun, 'whether you ever deign to cast your eyes on such an unworthy object, but I am one of those who are fed by your bounty; long may we be



supported by it, and it is certain that I was in the chapel to-day during that strange unlooked-for scene.'

“‘ Strange indeed,’ said the Prior; ‘ but are you sure you heard the affair aright; people of your class are often apt to have incorrect ears.’

“‘ I shouldn’t wonder if I had,’ said Lebrun; ‘ for I imagined I heard your Reverence accused of detaining the orphan’s right, and I should have thought the very words would have choked him that uttered them.’

“‘ Were you a friend of Father Bernardine’s?’ said the Prior.

“‘ I knew him, my lord,’ answered Lebrun, ‘ and had as much regard for him as one poor man generally has for another—that is, I left it to the rich to scout him; but the only piece of service I ever rendered him was, finding him this

day in the chapel, and seeing he was desirous of an interview with your Reverence, I lent him a helping hand, though I must say it turned out far different from what I expected.' The Prior reflected for some moments, and then said, ' I was certainly grossly deceived in that man, and grossly slandered by him ; if it is true that he for so many years concealed my nephew from my tenderness, did he not own that his motive for so doing was a bad one ? Does the blame rest with me ? Why did he not even now name him ? Why did he keep me so long ignorant of the happiness that was in store, and leave the world to imagine that nothing but the force of law can oblige me to do what is right ? The wary caution which, from this want of confidence, I shall be compelled to adopt against impostors, will be construed by evil-minded men into want of

natural feeling. They little know me who think I would not be forward to welcome the child of my deluded sister, and restore him fourfold that of which he has been so long deprived.'

“ ‘ Would you really, my lord ! ’ exclaimed Lebrun eagerly, ‘ suppose that another should bring him to you ; is your incredulity inclined to yield upon sufficient proof ? ’

“ ‘ Whoever should be the means of uniting us,’ replied the Prior, “ would be my greatest benefactor ; all I ask is, as you say, sufficient proof, and liberty to follow my inclination without the public’s interfering in a concern of so delicate a nature.’

“ ‘ Then you may easily be satisfied,’ said Lebrun ; ‘ I know where the young man now is, and if you are sincere in your professions, in four and twenty

hours he shall stand before you, and you may receive all the evidence that is necessary from him.'

" 'Is it possible !' cried the Prior, with transport, 'so soon are my wishes to be accomplished ! My good friend, if you really fulfil your engagement, you may name your own reward : but, I fear——' and he suddenly paused.

" 'What's the matter now, my lord ?' said Lebrun, 'are doubts to be listened to, when a man's duty lies plain before him ?'

" 'Consider my reputation,' replied the Prior, with a look of mortification ; 'there are scruples, which prove insurmountable barriers to the wishes of one highly dignified in the church as I am ; do you think my nephew is a heretic, if so, great as the sacrifice would be, I must submit to every calumny my enemies may choose

to invent, rather than encourage in my own family a pestilence I have sworn to assist in exterminating.'

“ ‘ As to what he is now,’ said Lebrun, ‘ that is I conclude of no consequence; a heretic beggar may be tolerated, but a heretic Baron is quite another affair, and by no means to be sanctioned. But there is no Saint so quick at conversions as your Saint Louis ; a few of the wonder-working pieces that go by his name, spread in heaps before a man, are irresistible.’

“ ‘ No levity, I charge you,’ said the Prior, ‘ this is not a subject to be treated with disrespect.’

“ ‘ I know it, my lord,’ replied Lebrun, ‘ and since you are so condescending as to speak to me upon it, I must be so bold as to tell you all I think. I mean no offence, but if I place your nephew in

your hands, you must give me some pledge that you intend acting by him directly contrary to what the world, a lying world it often is, gives you credit for.' There was another and a longer pause, Lebrun triumphing in the ability with which he concluded he had matched his Reverence, and the Prior almost too angry at his familiarity to vouchsafe a reply. At length, however, he judged it more prudent to assume the appearance of throwing off all reserve; 'Such a pledge you shall certainly have, if you require it,' he said, 'but in a few words I will convince you that your doubts are not only injurious, but hurtful to your cause. The world judges without consideration: of what benefit to me is a wealth I cannot use? Are not the revenues of my priory sufficient for wants which the severe laws of our discipline,



as well as natural inclination, circumscribe within such narrow limits? No, all my desire for superfluity is that the poor and the orphan may benefit by it, and surely those of my own flesh ought to be first considered. Believe me, men are seldom gratuitously wicked ; I am suspected of a desire to detain the wealth, the care of which so much interferes with my repose ; but I have never been tried, and a fair trial is all I ask. I was, you know, first told of the death of my nephew, then that I had been imposed upon, and he still lived ; every search I could make was vain, and now, after a lapse of nearly twenty years, I am accused of a wish to defraud him, when even his existence is not proved to me. Has the law freed him from the stain of his birth? no ; has the church received him into her bosom? no ; yet am I ready to welcome, to che-

rish, to support him, and all I stipulate is, first, a clear conviction that I am not imposed upon; and next, that I may be allowed to receive him willingly, and not appear to yield to force what I deny to duty. Be just, whatever the world may say; if you still hesitate, hear me swear by every thing we hold sacred, that you risk nothing by furthering my wishes, but on the contrary that you ensure your own advantage whilst adding to my happiness.' Lebrun listened with eager attention; the air of frankness which the Prior assumed imposed upon his judgment—the confidence placed in him gratified his vanity. Accustomed to detect and despise the petty artifices of his thick-headed companions, he was not on his guard against the wary politician who despised him in his turn, and acknowledging that what the Prior had just said was what he

ought to feel, he contented himself with declaring, that if after that he was deceiving him, the devil had taken more pains than usual in making him a villain. No protestations were wanting on the Prior's side, and, unwilling that after-reflection should cool his purpose, he proposed sending instantly, according to Lebrun's directions, to fetch back the fugitive. On this point, however, the latter was firm ; he was determined to go for him himself, and go alone, and no information would he give that could render his services unnecessary. The Prior vainly remonstrated ; his opponent was inflexible, and too much eagerness might ruin the project ; he was forced therefore to submit, and to confess, with inward vexation, that the most powerful are often subservient to the caprice of their meanest instruments. Lebrun was for that night

kept from all communication with the persons of the household, and early the following morning, having first changed his ragged garments for the more respectable dress of one of the Prior's attendants, he set out, mounted on a swift steed, and leading another for Isidore's use, with directions to make as much speed as possible to return."

This was the sum of what he had to relate, and it appeared so important, that the night was far advanced before he and his auditors had come to any decisive resolution. Isidore immediately perceived the risk he should run in thus voluntarily surrendering himself to a suspected enemy, but the recollection of what he had that day heard made him willing to incur some danger sooner than leave the country, and its effect on the Prior might, he thought, induce him the more readily to acknow-

ledge a relative who was no longer coming to rob him of his possessions, since they were already adjudged to the Baron. Lebrun, though in general sufficiently clear-sighted, now felt himself bound in honour to support the cause he had undertaken, and while endeavouring to convince Isidore, almost succeeded in convincing himself that there was nothing to be apprehended, and much to be gained, if the Prior were sincere in his offers. After long consideration, perhaps not so deep as more mature and reflecting heads would have given the subject, it appeared advisable to all rather to venture on a return, than to provoke a man of so much power by ill-timed opposition ; and early the following morning they determined to commence their journey. Gaspard was to proceed on foot to Vallerargues, and Isidore judged it unnecessary to give him

more than a slight caution not to communicate his proceedings to Madame Durand, as, reckoning on the swiftness with which he purposed travelling, he fully expected to be himself the bearer of the good news he had just learnt, and of speedily rejoining her under circumstances so much more propitious. The article relative to religion, Lebrun had certainly kept in the back-ground, whether from thinking it no obstacle, or judging it might be too powerful a one for him to combat, we do not pretend to decide; he had also added some information respecting the Count de St Romain's manner of proceeding, which quieted the fears of Gaspard as to his share in the late insurrection; during his residence at the Priory, he had learned the extreme liberality and clemency of the Intendant from many a trembling culprit, whom he



had sent reassured from his presence ; they had all pointed out Father Bernardine as the author of the disturbance, and he was beyond the reach of human punishment ; they had also represented the conduct of Isidore in such favourable colours as proved him rather deserving of commendation than punishment ; with the exception therefore of two or three who were considered as incendiaries, all hearts were set at ease, and the chief sufferers were a few malignant spirits, disappointed in their expectation of a fine harvest of human misery.

In the mean time, every measure was taking at Montpellier by M. de M—, for the final arrangement of the Baron's cause, and his first moment's leisure was dedicated with his wonted humanity to the unhappy prisoner, for whose safety Madame Durand had so powerfully in-

terested him. But in this case, there were circumstances which baffled the zeal of the advocate; not only was the fact sworn to by several of the soldiers who were near the spot at the time the fatal deed was perpetrated, but Pierre himself, overpowered by the horrors of his unintentional parricide, would suffer no testimony to appear in his favour, or allow of any petition for a mitigation of his punishment. Through the kind efforts of M. de M—, his two friends, Monsieur Brunel and Andore, had been constantly permitted to see him; they failed in shaking his resolution, but in the dungeon where no consolation could enter, except that heavenly ray which pierces into the darkest abodes of human misery, their words fell with more force on his heart, than when in the enjoyment of health and liberty, he had lived but the present mo-

ment, and put off the thoughts of death to the period of old age. Andore seldom left him : his present strong feeling contrasted forcibly with the coldness with which he had sometimes checked the young man's advances, but the Christian is a brother born for adversity, and Andore aimed at no other title. From morning till night he would sit by him, neither terrified by the paroxysms of his despair, nor overcome by his despondency ; when he could listen, he would dwell with so much warmth on the love of God and the mercy of the Saviour, that the penitent Pierre, at times, felt his whole soul wrapt in the transporting idea ; there was no severity, no harshness in his teaching, he had been himself drawn by the cords of love, and he saw that the sufferer before him might be melted by tenderness, but would be rendered stubborn by terror.

How beautiful is that religion which can thus reconcile mercy with justice, even on the head of the vilest, and which disarms man of the thunder he is too naturally inclined to launch against his fellow, to make him the messenger of peace! What have the champions of infidelity to offer us in its stead?

The day of the trial arrived, and the gaoler was soon expected to lead the criminal before his judges. With what feelings did Monsieur Brunel press to his bosom, this offspring of his daughter's shame, on whom the sins of his parents were about to be so grievously visited? How did the tears pour down his furrowed cheeks, and his whole frame shake in strong convulsive throbs, while he blessed the unhappy Pierre, and prayed over him even with a father's love! His friends, for M. de M— was also present, bore

witness by their looks how deeply they were interested in the scene. Pierre alone was unmoved ; his face indeed was pale as marble, and his hand as cold, but a settled calm had taken possession of his mind, and it seemed as if he had lost even the power of being touched by the sympathy of others. In vain they again pressed upon him, that the rash action to which he had been so highly provoked should be laid to the charge of the aggressor, that where the will was innocent, no guilt could be attached—on this point he was inexorable ; the mention of those he loved best was equally unavailing, his heart was as if already dead, and life but a weary load of remorse and misery that he wished not to retain. At his request they joined for the last time in prayer ; no haughty self-dependance deprived him of the only comfort such an

hour can receive ; he knew himself to be a sinner, and the friend of sinners had not deserted him. His path in life had been lonely, he was loved by few, understood by none, and despised by most, and with scarcely any tie to bind him to this world, it was not wonderful that he felt on leaving it, as if it was a strange land and not a home he was quitting. Should his judges even absolve him, he felt he could not acquit himself ; a father's blood had been shed, he considered not who that father was, and conscience too strong for mortal voice to silence, would have unceasingly repeated the accusation : there is no living at peace with self-reproach : happy those who are called to die, when they have no hope on this side the grave !

The fatal moment at length came, nor would his friends leave him even then. On entering the stately buildings of the



palace, whose architectural magnificence contrasted strongly with the dark abode they had just quitted—on viewing the thoughtless crowds assembled, as if for some exhibition of amusement, the bustle of preparation, the pomp and ceremonial of justice, and the eagerness of the accusers, Pierre smiled mournfully, as he thought how important misery rendered one who had lived till now so unheeded. The guards escorted him to the prisoner's bench, and his friends were humanely allowed to remain near: the trial began, its forms were tedious, and during its continuance, the most attentive observer could not have remarked the slightest variation of hope or fear on his countenance: calmly and coldly as he had always surveyed the world, he looked on without elation, though without moroseness.

The evidence for the prosecution at

length closed, and that for the defence was called for; Andore at this moment was about to rise, but Pierre resolutely preventing him, begged leave to address the court, and as soon as silence was restored, began; “ My lords, permit me to say, that I can allow of no defence, for I confess myself guilty, and it is your condemnation, not your acquittal, that will be kindness to me. I have been from my birth a wretched outcast from society, claiming neither country nor kindred, with every hope crushed, and every affection blighted, one of those whom the world treats with its needful, though unmerited severity, and whose only privilege is to live. On the wide earth there are but two to whom I have clung, one is my mother, and heaven in its mercy has happily rendered her insensible to sorrow; the other”—here a convulsive sob for a

moment impeded his utterance, but he quickly resumed, "the other, I have sworn that her hand shall never be polluted by being joined to that of a parricide; to have lived separate from her would have been worse than a thousand deaths—your sentence will put a short period to this agony, and believe me, you have seldom pronounced it against one who could receive it with more gratitude." He hastily sat down, for a short time covered his face with his hands, and then again resumed his wonted fortitude. The clemency of the judges, however, would not be satisfied without the testimony of Monsieur Brunel and the old mountaineer, but it was too feeble to outweigh the zealous witnesses who panted for the destruction of this heretic resister of legal authority; though unwillingly, they were forced to pronounce the pain of death, and

the faint glow that overspread his cheek on hearing the awful doom, seemed the flush of joy and exultation, rather than of dismay.

Pierre was remanded to prison, and the eager multitude shouldering each other out when the sight was over, departed unconcernedly to talk over the scene they had just witnessed. The excellent Monsieur Brunel determined on remaining with his unhappy grandson, and to support him through the last trying hour, and through the kind interference of M. de M—, the officiating Priest was prevented from molesting him with his useless exhortations. Many, on hearing the particulars of so sad a story, wept over Pierre's early doom; but the days of his sorrow were drawing fast to an end, and a life which had scarcely been brightened by one gleam of joy was about to close.

though amidst every outward circumstance of horror, with a peace, which those who pitied him would scarcely have understood. Andore, by his desire, hastened to Vallerargues, if possible to console his afflicted Jeannette; it was not without much emotion that he contemplated for the last time, that splendid city where science, wealth, and grandeur had allured their votaries; many learned, many rich, many powerful were there, but though possessed of all their hearts could desire, there was one separated from them by the gloomy walls of a prison, who, soaring above all they so eagerly sought, would not have exchanged the moment that was to land him in eternity, for the years of pleasure and of glory to which they looked forward with such painful anxiety.

## CHAPTER IX.

---

Souffre, espere et poursuis, le temps change les choses,  
Quand l'hyver est passé on voit naître les roses.  
Tes maux te donneront peut être un meilleur sort,  
Il est de mauvais vents qui conduisent au port.

COMTESSE DE LA LUZE.

---

ISIDORE had reached the Priory before he was perfectly determined what line of behaviour to pursue in the approaching interview with his noble relative, whether to win his favour by submission, or boldly assert his right ; but as in most other cases where previous resolutions are formed in ignorance, he was at last obliged to own, that by the Prior's conduct his own must be regulated. On alighting from their horses, Lebrun informed him, that



orders had been given for their admission at a private gate, and here they found a person in readiness to conduct them to their apartment. Isidore desired the Prior might be informed of their arrival, and a silent bow from the attendant was his only reply.

It was not without some dismay that Lebrun heard the bolts drawn, and the bars fixed as the door closed after him, and though he considered it most prudent not to mention his apprehensions, he could not but augur ill from a precaution so unnecessary in receiving welcome guests; Isidore was at first indifferent to the occurrence, and appeared wholly occupied with the thoughts of the approaching interview; however, even he was at length roused by the increasing darkness which already prevented them from more than barely distinguishing the

objects around, and the prospect of remaining thus imprisoned for the night, by no means suited the impatience of his wishes. The apartment in which they found themselves was lofty and spacious, lighted by several large casement windows strongly defended by iron bars, and hung with tapestry which might have been considered splendid in the infancy of the art, but whose gigantic figures thus dimly seen, bore some resemblance to a train of silent and motionless spectres. A few heavy old-fashioned chairs, and two wooden beds which would not have been considered as too luxurious for a guard-room, was the only furniture, except that in one corner behind a large skreen, was a broken trou-madame table, at which it was probable some servitors in attendance had often beguiled their leisure. At one extremity of the room

were hung some paintings from the legends of the church, and an immense crucifix and a benetoir for holy water, over which an industrious spider had spun her flimsy web, completed the decorations. This examination, which afforded but little satisfaction, being ended, nothing remained to excite them to patience, but the hope, as all distant sounds were gradually dying away in the Priory, that the moment of release was approaching; a footstep along the corridor confirmed this expectation; it was, however, only the same attendant, who entered with a lamp and some provisions. These he placed on an oaken table which he drew forward, and having given them to understand that the Prior would not be visible till the next day, was about to retire, when Lebrun laying hold on his cloak, endeavoured to compel him into a more communicative

temper. His efforts were, however, vain, the attendant wrenching his garment from his hold, retired with the utmost speed, and put an end as before by his bolts and bars to all attempts at egress.

“ Well, my friend ;” said Isidore, “ if we are for one night condemned to confinement, it is a comfort to consider that starvation is not a part of our penance ; let us eat, and be as cheerful as we can, and as wise men ought to be, and drink to the health of those who are so careful to secure us from danger.”

“ Our lady grant,” replied Lebrun, gravely, “ that the safety be not without, and the danger within ; its a bad companion to be locked up with, and a man’s courage often fails him, when he has no more room to show it in, than four stone walls will afford him. I wish we were

rather at sea, even in a stiff gale and a crazy vessel !”

Isidore endeavoured to rally him out of his fears, but Lebrun felt, that if treachery were intended, he alone was to blame for his rash confidence, and he could not be prevailed upon to pass the night otherwise than on a chair placed against the door, by which precaution he hoped to guard, at least, against sudden surprise. Isidore lay down wrapt in his cloak on one of the beds, and fatigued with the exercise of the day, after commending himself to the Divine protection, fell asleep, and woke not, till the sun pouring its floods of light through the large unshuttered casements, recalled him to the recollection of his situation. Starting up, he perceived with a smile, that his self-constituted guard had yielded, even in the

uneasy attitude in which he was placed, to the charms of Morpheus, and sat nodding forwards, the image of complete repose. Unwilling to disturb him, Isidore gently opened one of the windows, to enjoy the freshness of the morning air, and the joyous melody of a thousand little birds. The room in which they had slept, was, he found, situated in a wing of the Priory, and seemed far removed from the inhabited part of the building by the chapel and hospital, and to communicate with a strong tower beyond it that was constructed on a brink of a steep rocky precipice, down which a shelving path led to a deep and narrow river that rolled rapidly beneath. The windows looked out upon a large expanse of smiling country and distant blue mountains, and beneath them lay the terraces of the regular and stiffly planted gardens of the Priory, where the



labourers were already busy at their work. Some young girls and children were also to be seen in the neighbouring vineyards, gathering fruit in that cool hour for the day's supply, and women ranged by the banks of the stream, had, long before the rising of the sun, been employed in beating their linen, or wading barefoot in the transparent tide, were washing the wool to prepare it for the spindle: the men were busy in their fields and gardens, rejoicing in the plenty so richly spread around, that the poor as well as the rich might freely partake. Isidore leaned his forehead against the iron grating, and as he contemplated the cloudless blue sky and the fair and diversified face of nature, involuntarily sighed to witness the happiness of those with whom he had so long associated, and he was deeply meditating whether the cares of grandeur, should his

claim prove successful, would not lead him to regret the easily-obtained pleasures of humble life, when his reverie was disturbed by a violent exclamation from Lebrun, who, feeling the door pushed against him, and thinking in his sleep only of the dangers he had apprehended, seemed determined to refuse all entrance to the intruders. Isidore, with some difficulty, prevailed on him to quit his post, and to admit the attendant, who had waited on them the preceding night, and who first replenishing their empty dishes with substantial provisions for breakfast, informed them, that by noon the Prior would give them audience.

It was not with perfect tranquillity that the Prior had heard of the arrival of a person, whose claims, if once established, would deprive him of every hope of even eventually enjoying the wealth he so much

coveted. He had previously taken every precaution for his security whilst under his roof, and alleging the plea of indisposition quitted his noble guest at an early hour, and retiring to his chamber, forbad all intrusion, except from his favourite valet, a man who had made himself so useful, that he soon perceived he might be useless during the remainder of his life.

“ Is Constant here ?” was his master’s first question.

“ No, my lord,” replied the man : “ your lordship shall be informed when he arrives.”

It was growing late, and the Prior impatiently ringing his bell, repeated the question, and received the same reply : “ Strange,” he exclaimed, “ when he knows how much I want him ! but it is always the way with those tools of our power, they measure their consequence

by our need." As his hand was a second time on the bell, the valet entered, and informed him, Constant had sent to say, an unfortunate accident had thrown him from his horse, and so injured both steed and master, that it was impossible for him to attend his Reverence's summons before the following day.

" I would the beast had broken his neck," said the Prior, " provided there is another such a serviceable villain in the world to supply his place ; but if it must be so, let those persons just arrived be attended to, and not expect to see me to-night ; I am weary, and will retire to rest ; yes," he continued in a lower tone, " we all need rest, happy those who can find it." The valet retired as commanded, and no sooner was his master alone, than he threw himself on his couch, and shading his eyes with his hand from the glare of

the lights, sat for a considerable time as if lost in deep reflection. “ I have you though, young man ! ” he at length exclaimed, “ and may I meet the disappointment I should deserve, if I am fool enough to lose sight of you again ; a pretty thought indeed ! a beardless youth, with your head stuffed with half-formed ideas, pretend to cope with the experience of a man whom the wise ones of the land have found themselves no match for : *you* think to pluck down the honours I have reared with so much toil and pains as easily as the summer shed which has so often sheltered your peasant limbs ! I am mistaken, since a few soft words have so easily tempted the silly fool to run his head into the snare, if I cannot quickly induce you to yield these fine pretensions. But is all safe ? Let me reflect before I risk my reputation upon the throw ; has

he no friends to supply his lack of brains? None who will bestir themselves to inquire how this bubble burst, which they had taken some trouble to blow up? None to shake the head, and cry, the Prior of St. Roc's conduct must not be examined too strictly, lest tales should come to light that would make men wonder, or else the Prior of St. Roc is not licensed to place himself above law. Let us unmask the holy hypocrite! Let us see over what crimes our mother church throws the veil of her charity; and if they dare, am I to be frightened with words? Cannot I shake off suspicion with as much ease as ever? Is it the first time that men's tongues have meddled with what is above them, ay, and smarted for their presumption too? Come what will," he continued, rising from the couch, "I am resolved to clear my way of the vermin that seek to cross



it, and if the laws of Heaven cannot restrain me, how shall the feeble chains which men forge to bind each other keep me from my purpose. When once this upstart is removed, let the noble Baron from his distant exile attempt to defraud me, he shall see the difference between possession and expectation ! Dream on to-night, young man, of coronets and ermined robes, our strength is shortly to be tried, and to-morrow's sun will rouse you from these gilded visions to a certainty less pleasing than you expect."

The valet, who, well used to these soliloquies, was accustomed to break in with unchecked freedom, to prevent their reaching the ears of others, now opened the door to remind the Prior that all the household had not yet retired to rest, and prevailed on him to allow himself to be undressed, and to take the composing

draught to which he was usually forced to have recourse, in order to procure sleep. In the morning the expected Constant arrived, and was instantly admitted. As he passed through the hall, all shrunk from the approach of a man who was alike feared and hated, though few were in the secret of his various talents, and his employers were little disposed to boast of the services he performed for them. He was ostensibly a petty officer engaged in conducting the chain of criminals to Marseilles, who were there to expiate their offences by years of hardships and misery on board the gallies, and as his visits to the country were solely undertaken for this purpose, he was always regarded with dislike; but Constant little heeded the world's opinion, so long as it did not interfere with his solid gains, and cocked his hat more fiercely when he perceived

the averted looks of those he chanced to meet. The conference was long, and no sooner had he left the Prior's presence than the latter proceeded to the apartment in which Isidore was confined, and which, as we have mentioned before, was situated in a remote part of the building. If Lebrun had been near at hand during the disclosure of his sentiments on the preceding evening, he could scarcely have felt more uncomfortable than he did when the attendant again appeared to announce the Prior's approach: "Ah!" thought he, as they heard his steps along the passage, "if his Reverence prove a knave, as I grieve to say many a tonsured head has done before him, how nicely have I caught myself in the trap, when I thought I was only opening it to let another out! This comes of being over busy; if ever I get safe out of this place, may I stick to the

last and the awl for the rest of my life, if I do not let the world proceed as it will, and fools and rogues dispute till they become wise and honest, before I meddle again." His reflections were cut short by the Prior's entrance, with whom they were soon left alone, the valet merely accompanying him to the door, and retiring as if to keep guard against intruders: If Isidore was anxious to study a countenance where he hoped to read much of his future destiny, the Prior was no less desirous of baffling all scrutiny; a sort of nervous irritability seemed to disturb him when he first entered, but this soon disappeared, and they stood for some time in painful silence, as if afraid of committing themselves even by the tone of the first word. The Prior endeavoured, but in vain, to assume more than his usual haughtiness, and to strike terror into an

obscure individual, who dared to appear before him as an equal ; but there was something in the dignified, unassuming modesty of the young man, that, notwithstanding all his efforts, was not without its effect. Instead of the awkward peasant he had taught himself to expect, he beheld a form of fine proportion, a countenance indicative of every amiable quality, a brow where open candour was blended with firmness, and a demeanour equally removed from servility and presumption. Far different was the uneasy appearance of Lebrun, who seemed in an instant to lose much of the effrontery which generally supported him ; and, as if he began to consider Isidore as a mere peasant, and himself as a most egregious fool, for having ever believed the contrary, he trembled for himself—he trembled for his friend, and would have given the little he

possessed in the world, that he had arrived too late at Cette to stop the intended voyage. The Prior held in his hand a copy of the decree just passed by the parliament of Montpellier for the legalizing of the Baron de Courcy's marriage, and which M. de M— had with the utmost diligence despatched for his information. It caught Isidore's attention, as, wearied with undergoing his uncle's keen and searching glances, he had turned hastily away; the Prior followed the direction of his eye, and instantly tearing the paper with a look of contempt, said, "Much importance is not to be attached to such a document by any one, especially by those who abuse the world's credulity with romantic tales trumped up at this precise moment to gull the simple. You are mistaken, young man, if you think the dying delirium of that old dotard gave me the first



insight into your intentions ; I have long known and pitied them, but they should have remained unpunished had not this increase of impudence rendered my lenity blamable. I could tolerate fanciful speculations—I *must* necessarily check them if once they proceed to action.”

“ My lord !” exclaimed the astonished Isidore, not fully prepared for this address.

“ Ay, ay,” replied the Prior, “ there is no need of softening matters with such as are accustomed to the unvarnished truth ; you know your own pretensions as well as I do, and are perhaps rather to be compelled than reasoned into surrendering them ; you came here by my orders, and——”

“ No, my lord,” said Isidore, “ by your request, not your order.”

“ We will not dispute about words,”

said the Prior, scornfully; “ whatever terms that poor ignorant fellow may have made use of, when the will of a superior is conveyed to an inferior, it is always received as a command.” Here Lebrun, who felt a little courage arise on finding himself so contemptuously treated, begged his Reverence to remember that he had never undertaken to compel the young man’s attendance. The Prior did not deign him a reply, but continuing his speech said, “ Notwithstanding your presumption, Sir, I am willing to hear your defence; let it be a short one, and I will endeavour to answer it.” Isidore remained silent, for he had indeed nothing to relate that could bear upon the question, except the declarations of Father Bernardine, which were already despised. Observing him hesitate, the Prior said, “ It remains then for me to plead your cause ;

ill fares the man who is forced to trust to the eloquence of an enemy ; but strictly speaking I am not one to you, because I desire to check an ambition that would prove your ruin. Before I proceed to compulsory measures, I wish to try milder means, and persuade you to remain contentedly in the obscure station that Providence has marked out, and for which nature has kindly fitted you ; believe me, young man," he tauntingly added, " hands formed to guide the plough are not adapted to wield a sword, and a coronet would ill suit the uncombed locks of a peasant ; be advised, and recollect the fate of so many who have fallen victims to aspiring vanity." The Prior's sneers roused the spirit of Isidore : " Whatever destiny, my lord," he proudly exclaimed, " may await me, it shall find me prepared either to suffer or enjoy it ; it is not the

long habit of outward superiority that gives real greatness, and poor and despised as you consider me, I feel myself at this moment your equal, without waiting for the tedious forms of law to fix my rank in society." The Prior's colour rose, and the veins in his forehead swelled with anger at this reply : Lebrun twitched Isidore by the sleeve, so completely did he appear to him to have lost all sense of propriety, but the undaunted youth prepared to assert his rights in proportion as he found them attacked, stood his ground resolutely, without fearing an adversary who could only oppose violence to justice. The Prior checked his rising indignation ; it was not his custom to allow any man the advantage of putting him in a passion, and the tone of his voice, though tremulous, was even lower than usual when he replied, " Either some friend or your own

inexperience has advised you ill, young man ; you forget how much is in my power ; if I were to recognise you, you would no longer stand in need of those tedious forms of law which you so philosophically despise ; if I reject you, you are lost without the possibility of recovery. Since you disdain appealing to my generosity, you have nothing left but my justice, and as you seem disinclined to plead for yourself, do you," turning to Lebrun, " who have assumed the office of gentleman usher to this newly-created peer, inform me of the merits of his case, that I may know, whether it is the blood of my noble family that boils with such ardour in his veins." Lebrun, thus called upon, endeavoured to recollect every circumstance that tended to support Isidore's claim, but they were unfortunately summed up in his own declaration and that of

the dying Pilgrim. Observing him hesitate, the Prior continually begged him not to be discouraged, but to search the inmost recesses of his memory, for that assuredly a subject of such weight and importance must have many more testimonials that only waited to be called forth. All was in vain; the unhappy witness, convinced of his folly when too late, could only repeat that it was his lordship himself had emboldened him to undertake the part he acted, till the Prior, with affected mirth, threw himself back in his chair, as if overcome with the violence of a fit of laughter: "A formidable antagonist truly you have brought me," he at length exclaimed; "if every aspiring beggar were to be thus easily admitted to wealth and honours on his own word, the poor would indeed be shortly provided for, or rather we might at once abdicate our dignities to



those who are so much more worthy of enjoying them. But for whom, audacious villains, did you take the Prior of St. Roc, that you hoped to cheat him by an artifice too gross to deceive an infant? Fools that you were, and you," turning to Lebrun, " doubly a fool, to spend the small portion of sense with which nature has endued you, in hastening your own destruction. Could you for a moment imagine that you were a fit instrument to be employed by me, or that I used you for any other purpose than to decoy your fellow into the snare? Your eager vanity has undone you, and I almost scorn success over such a ready dupe! And you, young man, were not your wits, though sharpened by poverty, equal to fashioning a more artful tale, or to providing you with more impudence to support it? Never again hope to try your stratagems on the unwary; I

should be acting an ungenerous part to the world, if I let loose two such expert dissemblers back upon it without some mark by which their snares might be avoided ; I offer you this alternative, either instantly confess your imposture, and consent to quit this country immediately, never to return, on such a provision as my liberality shall allow you, or presume to stand to it, and a few years hard labour in the galleys must be your fate, an excellent recipe in such cases ; and I can assure you, by that little door the way is easily found that leads to them, and this night those who know best how to deal with such stubborn subjects will be ready to receive you."

How long he might have been disposed to continue his invectives is uncertain ; Isidore, calmly folding his arms, and looking steadily at him, was rather dis-

posed to let the wordy torrent pass, and Lebrun, in a sort of despairing hopelessness, turned his eyes continually towards the way by which they had entered. At length his listening ear appeared to be struck with a sound which was at first so faint, that his companions, unable to distinguish it, looked with amazement when he moved quickly towards the door, as if prepared to undo its fastenings. “Stop,” cried the Prior, eagerly following him, “and think not you can thus easily escape——” What he would have added was lost in the noise of a bustle and dispute in the corridor, as if some one was contending for a right to pass, accompanied by several repeated and authoritative knocks, and a voice, which he knew to be that of the Count de St. Romain, requesting admission. The Prior allowed him thrice to repeat his

demand before he was able to resolve on what to do in so perplexing a conjuncture, and Isidore failed not to observe an expression of mortification on his countenance which all his accustomed art could not conceal: low muttered curses also proceeded from his lips, and such ill-befitting expressions proved that perfect patience was not one of the vows that bound the churchmen of those days. He thought himself, however, at last obliged to comply, and the Count entered, followed only by his private secretary, much to the consolation of Lebrun, who with difficulty restrained the expression of his joy at this well-timed interruption. There was perhaps seldom seen a more painful struggle between conflicting feelings than now manifested itself in the Prior's looks; the perturbation of his recent indignation, rage at the check thus

put to his proceedings, a wish to appear unconcerned at his guest's presence, successively displayed themselves, while his smile of welcome assorted but ill with the lowering bend of his dark eye-brows, and the quivering of his lip. The Count, easy and unembarrassed, appeared not to notice the uneasiness he occasioned, but addressing to the Prior the usual compliments of salutation, begged he might not be considered so far an intruder as that his presence should interrupt the business in which he seemed engaged; he had, he said, some trifling affairs to arrange with him, but they were not of sufficient consequence to require immediate attention, and he was perfectly ready to wait his leisure. The Prior eagerly begged him to despatch first the business on which he came, declaring no consideration should induce him to be guilty of

such a breach of politeness as to delay his noble visiter, and the Count, with equal ceremony, insisted on being disregarded for the present. “Your feelings, my dear Prior,” he continued, “I can easily imagine at this moment, and I respect them; you were, I see, desirous of coming forward secretly and unsolicited on this occasion: it is a generous proceeding, and I sincerely hope you find the young man all that your fondest wishes could desire. He seems a fine youth, but we are sometimes woefully deceived by external appearance, and the days are gone by when nobility of form was only connected with nobility of birth.”

“And may I ask, my lord,” said the provoked Prior, “by what means you became so well acquainted with my private actions, and how you considered yourself at liberty to follow me into a place, where;



at least, I thought myself free from intrusion?"

"It was whispered me," returned the Count; "it is needless to inform you by whom; those who wish to obtain information, must be dumb; not that I sought for it, upon my honour, or could reckon upon so grievously offending you with my felicitations, yet you ought not to fear my discretion."

The Prior, while the Count sauntered to the other end of the room, to look at a Madonna of great merit, turned his penetrating suspicious glance on Lebrun, but the look of stupidity which he could in a moment assume, completely baffled all scrutiny, and left him still in uncertainty. The Count finished his examination of the painting with some expressions of approbation, which were received in silence, and returning to the rest of the party,

drew a chair, and begged they would not continue standing on his account, as he was in no haste, and should grieve to hurry their proceedings. The Prior following his example, threw himself upon a settee, and the Count pushing forward another chair to Isidore, he bowed, and seated himself, regardless of the frowns of his incensed uncle ; Lebrun also did the same, gaining courage as he noticed the decided manners of the Count, and feeling almost as much relieved, as if the chains he was threatened with had been just knocked off his hands. What the wary Prior found it difficult to deny, he always judged it most prudent plainly to confess, but it was with such reservations that the truth was rendered but little more clear. Anger and indignation would not answer now ; he was no longer the irritated head of his family, indignant at the artifices practised against him, but assumed the

behaviour of the cautious, yet anxious relative, who would willingly close his eyes against a fraud, the effect of which would be so satisfactory, but that sterner justice forbade, and maintained a warfare in his bosom he was impatient to terminate. As for himself, he declared it seemed to him impossible that a young man so prepossessing in his appearance, so winning in his manners, could have ever been accessory to the deceit ; no, he was the innocent dupe of darker intrigues, and he knew not how to punish one, whose only fault was, having fallen into the hands of villains ; to this he added, in pathetic language, a lamentation that his story could not be legally substantiated, and rested only on his own word.

“ My lord,” interrupted Isidore, indignantly, “ it is impossible but that proofs must exist.”

“ Patience, my young friend,” said the

Count, gently laying his hand on his arm, “we are all aware that you have the highest opinion of your own veracity, and had we tried it, we should probably have the same, but this is a case of more importance than the transfer of a few sheep or goats: eighty thousand livres a year are not to be obtained by simply asking for them, and other testimony is now wanting, which it seems you do not possess, and this is not to be wondered at; if you had had it, you doubtless would not have withheld it for twenty years out of consideration for the Prior, young heirs are usually more upon the alert. But first, my lord,” he continued, turning to the Prior, “if it were possible, we will say so for the sake of argument, that such proofs could be obtained as would convince the most doubting; did I understand you right that you are prepared to

recognise the decision of the parliament, which has been sent you, I believe, as well as to me, and restore the property, which, under the plea of an illegal marriage and want of heirs, has been made over to you ?”

“ Do you doubt my honour, Count ?” exclaimed the Prior, with much seeming astonishment.

“ No, my lord,” replied the Count, coolly, “ I only doubt your power : strong coffers sometimes shut with a magical spring, that cannot be opened except when the heart of the owner accords with his efforts ; however, since I certainly am bound to consider your honour as unimpeachable, you will, I conclude, rejoice on being assured the proofs you so much desire are in my possession. Come hither, Frank,” addressing his secretary, “ give me the casket I desired you to bring with

you." The secretary, who had remained at the farther end of the apartment, at a distance so respectful, that he appeared as if engaged in reckoning the birds that flew by the windows, rather than in listening to the conversation, delivered the casket as desired, and the Count slowly unlocking it, continued by saying, "It was fortunate, that on hearing the poor old man mention the name of Monsieur Montblanc, I immediately recollected the deposit he had committed to my care, and of which, on the report spreading of the son of the Baron de Courcy being still alive, and engaged in the late disturbance in the mountains, he judged it important for me to have in my hands: I have luckily brought it with me, and this is the packet." As he spoke, he proceeded to draw out the papers to which he alluded; they were written in various hands, and of different



descriptions. The Prior, as he watched him undoing them, forgetting his assumed moderation, vehemently exclaimed, "They are forgeries, Count de St. Romain, they must be forgeries, no falsehood can be supported by well-authenticated documents."

"Undoubtedly," replied the Count, "but if you also infer from the credibility of the testimony that the fact is true, I congratulate you on having your doubts so soon removed. I have authenticated several of these signatures, and others can be witnessed by those who wrote them. You will here see the circumstances established of the birth of the child, the particular mark made on his person by which he might be easily known, his being taken away from his nurse by one Daniel Gui, commonly called Father Bernardine, his reasons for so doing, and the cause of his being brought up in your vicinity, instead

of being sent to his father, as was the first intention. Madeline Delorme, I think the woman is called, can add her testimony ; if you wish, I will send for her," and without waiting a reply, the Count whispered his orders to his secretary, who immediately left the apartment.

" My lord," exclaimed the enraged Prior, " such insults are not to be borne ; I see your drift, and despise your malice as it deserves."

" Gently, my dear Prior," replied the Count, " have I gone beyond my authority ? Have I said a word of the commission you gave this same Father Bernardine, and a certain Vidal, whom I have since heard, was well fitted to be the instrument of such a deed : any thing of the sums taken from the sacred treasury to be the price of —— ?"

" May the curse of the church, who con-

siders herself aggrieved, if one of her members is insulted, fall on him, who dares to pronounce the word!" eagerly exclaimed the Prior. "Are base-born slaves, too, to be believed before me? Is my fair fame to be the sport of every villain who thinks readily to find amongst impious and profane scoffers, a patron to shield him from chastisement? If so, they are mistaken, the grave alone protects these wretches from my anger, and a feeble protection even that is, for whatever of character or reputation two such miscreants have left after them, shall be sacrificed to my revenge."

At this indecent burst of passion, all present remained silent, nor was the Prior's appearance less calculated to excite their surprise. The fiend who so often works unseen, seemed to reveal himself in every feature, and to delight in publicly hum-

bling his slave! Isidore turned away shocked from the scene, even Lebrun drew back to a greater distance, and the Count, who had raised the storm, found it not so easy a task to allay it. After some moments spent in those frantic contortions which are common to the maniac and the victim of passion, the Prior sunk back in his chair, and suffered, without interruption, the various excuses which the Count considered himself bound to make, but which appeared to come unwillingly from his lips, since nothing is more difficult than to apologize without being able to retract the offence; they served, however, as a pretence to the Prior, to relax a little of his indignation, and to admit that appearances were against him, though as a gentleman, the Count ought to have judged him with more candour. "Put yourself, my lord," he

said, “in my place ; you know my zeal for the church, my efforts for her glory, you may even consider them carried too far”—the Count bowed ; it was not difficult for a man of his loose opinions in ecclesiastical discipline to think so—“but if you can for a moment enter into my feelings, you will be enabled to conceive how severe a trial it was for me to see heresy rearing its accursed head in my own family ; this was a sufficient reason for my conduct, whatever others may be sought out ; I desired to do more for my nephew than either birth or fortune could, and before endeavouring to legalize my unhappy sister’s union with his father, to renovate, as it were, the fruit of it. I do not therefore deny, that I employed a man whom I then thought honest, to bring the child to me, but I was told of its death, and had no reason to suspect the con-

trary, nor could I do more than I publicly did to testify my grief?" The Count still continued silent ; all this was not much to the purpose, yet he felt it would be unwise, by useless irritation, to lose the clue of those windings and shiftings by which it appeared the wily priest was endeavouring to draw himself out of his difficulties. The Prior therefore receiving neither assent nor contradiction, was forced to proceed. " You cannot wonder if my honour took alarm at your insinuations ; perhaps I was too hasty, Count, but forgive me. Come, we will examine these papers together, or rather, I will credit them upon your word. Young man, rise, receive my blessing, it is given with a trembling hand, but my heart falters not, and implores on your head double for every happiness of which, till now, you have been deprived." Isidore, though he rose



as commanded, stood proudly independent; he could not feign a deference he did not entertain for all the offered wealth, and young as his experience was, he still saw duplicity lurking under the Prior's softened look. "Bear witness, Count," continued the latter, "that I promise, on one condition, to part to this young man, without his having recourse to litigation, with all the wealth I have till now held in faithful trust; on one condition—mark me, it is my last resolve—I do not always yield—that he return forthwith into the bosom of the holy true and undivided church, abjuring those errors which no faithful believer can tolerate. Is not this just?"

"I must say," replied the Count, "that since a condition is to be annexed to so large a benefice, you could scarcely have found out one more easy; a peppercorn

rent is a burden to it, for I imagine, my Lord, you will not be very strict in joining fasts and penances on your new convert, and I can testify in my own person, that a man may be a very good son of the church, and yet scarcely know lent from carnival; so, my young friend, let me be the first to wish you joy, and we will forget all past jarrings in congratulations on this happy occasion: we must drink to the health of the Baron de Courcy in the best vintage these cellars afford."

"Not on that condition, noble Count," replied Isidore, with firmness.

"Are you a fool, or mad?" exclaimed the Count, with unfeigned astonishment; "is such a fortune to be picked up like blackberries on the bushes, that you hesitate a moment to accept it? Come, come, think again before you decide; believe me, scruples are the worst things a man

can load himself with ; they are as sure to sink him, as leaden bullets in his pocket when he falls into a river. After all, there is no such great difference in saying your prayers in a church and in the desert, except, indeed, that the former is infinitely more commodious, and let me add, more respectable, too."

"Ease and respectability," replied Isidore, "are not to be put in competition with conscience. Could I be influenced by the motives you press upon me, or others even stronger, I should deserve to be despised by those I forsook, and those to whom I pretended to join myself. It is not from the heat of the moment I speak—what is founded on principle" is not easily shaken, and the light which I have received from heaven, I will not willingly put out ; I cannot unlearn the lessons of my whole life—I cannot con-

sider those differences as trifling, which I have been taught to look upon as essential; if my God whom I serve appoints wealth to me, he does not stand in need of my apostacy to procure it; if he does not, I am better without it; I see you think me weak, illiberal, and superstitious, but why should not the noblest of all causes sanction noble sentiments? You admire those rare instances of patriotism where the soul is proof against every bribe—at least, then, allow that christian principle is strong enough to resist what it feels to be wrong.”

“Then,” said the Count, “you reverse our sweeping clause, and damn all in the church, as she does all out of it?”

“If I did so,” replied Isidore, “I should virtually, though not nominally, be what you wish me. No, the toleration I desire for myself I would extend to all;

none but an Almighty eye can try the heart, but for myself I must be free ; conviction makes me a Protestant, such I have lived, and such I hope to die ; I am not ashamed of my faith—would you have me forsake it for one which might, as a pledge of my blind submission, require me to turn my arms against those with whom I have so long been united by the strongest of all ties, common oppression, against the parent who has no one but me left to support him ?”

“ But,” said the Count, “ you forget how many have taken the step that is now expected of you ; surely you would not think of casting unqualified censure on them ?”

“ I may be dispensed from judging of the conduct of others,” said Isidore, “ although I do claim liberty in what regards my own ; but when I consider the means

that have often been employed to terrify or decoy our brethren into becoming proselytes, you must pardon me, Count, if I say, that while this system continues, you will make no converts but of the base and cowardly, who fly off like frightened birds at the approach of a storm. Oppression often renders even the wicked firm in a bad cause ; how much more will it those who feel that they are right, and that the blessing of heaven accompanies them in danger as well as in safety."

" I agree with you so far," said the Count, " that if I had my way, I would no more persecute a Jew or a Musselman, than I would a Jesuit."

" Such blasphemous liberality," interrupted the Prior, " ill becomes an *ancient Catholic* ; but you see, my Lord, that my fears are verified, that poisonous heresy clings as closely as the tunic of the



Centaur, and it seems even our modern Herculesees are not entirely free from its contagion."

"Your similes, my dear Prior," said the Count in a low voice, and leaning over towards him, "are quite out of place; I was prepared for a rhodomontade at the outset; a man, a young man especially, does not like to own that his religion sits upon him like the traveller's cloak, which he throws off at the first warm sun-beam; only leave him to me." Lebrun also had drawn up to Isidore, and appeared with vehement gesticulations to be pressing the same point, but whatever arguments he made use of, they excited only a smile in reply. During this dispute the countenance of the Prior had displayed all the different emotions which agitated his breast; when he found the Count so bent on pursuing the point, and so well ac-

quainted with particulars which he had hoped were kept secret as the grave, he had proposed this as a last resource, which, judging however from his own principles, he had little hope would be rejected. At first therefore he waited in breathless anxiety, but no sooner had he heard Isidore's sentiments, and observed the look of decision with which they were accompanied, than his alarm vanished, and he regarded the young man with the same contempt that the trader feels for the poor Indian, who throws down his ornaments of solid gold for a few glittering glass beads. Wealth was in his eyes the only real good, and those who disregarded it, he considered not only as beings of an inferior order, but as possessed of faculties too weak to understand its true value. As circumstances there-

fore had turned out, he was not sorry for the sudden appearance of the Count, which had given him as he imagined, an opportunity of displaying at small expense his generosity and his zeal. It is possible also, that he considered Isidore's refusal when thus brought to the point, as a proof that he was not in fact the person he pretended to be, and that having simply expected his claims would have been bought off with a sum of money, he was not prepared to venture them into the publicity which an acceptance of his offer would necessitate: nor was he without hopes that the Count himself might be deceived, and that the papers he still held in his hand referred to some other person; and this ray of hope once admitted, he was about to inquire of the Count what had induced him at that pre-

cise time to seek him out, and how he had received information of Isidore's being in the Priory, when he was saved the trouble of these questions by an unexpected elucidation.



## CHAPTER X.

---

While we sit bousing at the nappy,  
Or gettin fu' and unco happy,  
We think na on the lang Scots miles,  
The mosses, waters, slaps, and styles  
That lie between us and our hame,  
Where sits our sulky, sullen dame  
Gathering her brows like coming storm,  
Nursing her wrath to keep it warm.

BURNS.

---

WHILE these considerations were rapidly passing through the Prior's mind, and the Count was endeavouring to recollect some of those arguments which he had been told were found so efficacious in enabling persons in Isidore's circumstances to yield with a good grace, and which was all he thought could be required, the sound was heard of several persons approaching, and

the Secretary, accompanied by Monsieur La Porte and Madeline, entered the room. All present, with the exception of the Count, were struck with surprise at their appearance, since, supposing them to have arrived from Vallerargues, their speed seemed incredible. The Count, noticing the Prior's astonishment, could not refrain from smiling as he said, "My Lord, it is against rule, I fear, for ladies to be received into this sanctuary, but the importance of the affair must plead my excuse, or, if that is insufficient, perhaps the gray locks and wrinkles of the fair one will procure me absolution; I had too much gallantry to refuse her solicitations, and indeed should not have given you the inconvenience of my company this morning, but that female tears cannot be resisted, even though the eyes they flow from are somewhat bleared and dimmed



with age." The Prior bit his lip ; he instantly perceived who was the secret promoter of the Count's interference, and that the story he was beginning again to hope might be discredited, was received as true by those whom it would not be so easy to dupe. Had Isidore wavered in his decision before they entered, the recollections their presence brought with it would have served to strengthen his resolution. An involuntary exclamation of delight escaped him as he felt himself pressed once more in the arms of friends so long tried and so firmly attached, and his confidence in his cause increased in the expectation of their support. It is, however, necessary to pass over the fond caresses of Madeline, her incoherent and often repeated questions, and the more temperate congratulations of M. La Porte, in order to account for their ar-

rival at a time so unexpected, though so desirable. We had wholly omitted mentioning that Simon Chas was continued in his office by the new Consul, and conceived no little pride at the stability of his good fortune: some trifling messages had led him of late so frequently to the Priory, that he began to imagine his presence almost indispensable there, and his inclination for good company, further strengthened by the fire-side warfare continually kept up at home, induced him to pass there every moment that could be spared from what he considered as his important official avocations. On the day preceding that of which we are speaking, he had been sent to the Priory with some papers which required the Intendant's signature; strict orders had, as usual, been given for his quick return, but Counts are not to be hurried, and Simon was content to wait

with wonderful patience the Intendant's leisure, wiling away the interval partly in the lodge of his old friend Francis, and partly in the kitchen and buttery, where his presence was rewarded with more varied and substantial fare. Between the time he was really obliged to dance attendance, and the additional moments devoted to good fellowship and good cheer, the evening was far advanced before his companions could persuade him that he was not their guest for the night. With much reluctance he yielded to their advice, though after going to the door and returning for the third time, a friendly shove was necessary to ensure his final exit. Poor Simon was not exactly, it must be confessed, in a state to reason on the expediency of this proceeding, and bitterly inveighing against the inhospitality of the times, continued for some time to follow

the road that lay before him, without remarking that he trod the self-same circle instead of advancing. How long he might have encompassed the Priory walls with the zeal and diligence of a sentinel or guard it is difficult to determine, as the approaching tread of horses at length made him suddenly halt, and withdraw under the cover of the wall, since, whether drunk or sober, he was instinctively a coward, and had as keen a scent of danger as an Indian has of his prey. Nor was he a little astonished to perceive two men on horseback approach a small gate of the Priory rarely opened to strangers, and to recognise in one of them Isidore Delorme, of whom such strange and contradictory reports had been lately spread at Vallegargues, and who was generally supposed to be far from all inquiry and search. Again and again he rubbed his eyes, ex-

pecting the delusion to vanish, but still he felt convinced it was Isidore ; that he saw him enter the gate as soon as it was unlocked, and heard his companion ask if the Prior could receive them immediately ; the wicket closed after them, and he was left to feed his curiosity with whatever suggestions his fancy could prompt. But the circumstance gave another turn to his thoughts, and forgetting or forgiving the cavalier treatment he had met with from his friends, Simon began at length to search in earnest for the road to the village, and [to pursue his way home with that thoughtless hilarity which threw a charm over the lonely way he trod. Indeed it seemed as if but few minutes had elapsed before he found himself in the presence of his wife, who was ominously waiting his arrival on the threshold of the door, a post she never took till her pa-

tience had been long exhausted. Simon was at this moment a step beyond his usual tremors, and boldly advancing to the charge, replied to her first salutation by continuing the song with which he had beguiled his steps: let a man, however, beware, even if he have the powers of an Orpheus to sing when a woman is bordering on a fit of passion; her anger was so much increased, that, finding all other methods of calming it ineffectual, he was at last obliged to profit by her curiosity, and protest if her violence did not cease, he would not relate any of the wonders he had seen since they parted. “And do you think I care for your drunken revels,” exclaimed the enraged Suzette; “would I even listen to the stale jokes of a party of good-for-nothing tippling knaves?”

“As for the worth of my companions,” said Simon, “let them speak for them-



selves ; they doubtless are best able ; but you shall not hear who I have seen stealing into the Priory like a sheep into the wolf's den, I was going to say, only a sheep has more wit than to do that."

" But I will hear," cried the dame, disdaining the coaxing arts that beguile so many fond husbands of their secrets ; " you shall tell me, if you hope for peace this week to come."

" Oh nobody," said Simon, not much relishing the threat, " but Isidore Delorme, our Isidore, who——"

" Isidore !" exclaimed his wife in astonishment ; " why you must have been looking through your glass at him. I tell you he's not quite such an idiot to be skulking about here, and a warrant in search of him."

" Idiot or not, I am not wise enough to determine," said Simon ; " I only know I

saw him attended by the Lord Prior's servants, flaunting it bravely I warrant, and disdaining to look at me, now the Baron's crown is dancing before his eyes."

"The Prior's servants!" exclaimed Suzette; "now Simon, you may as well tell me the truth at once, for you know I've ways of making you."

"I only meant one servant," said Simon, "a guard, for aught I know to the contrary."

"Ah!" said the dame, "and was he gagged?"

"Not that I saw," said Simon.

"And hand-cuffed?" continued his persevering wife.

"And how was he to hold his bridle then," said Simon.

"And they brought him in secretly?" said Suzette.

“ Yes,” replied Simon ; “ it was at the back entrance, near the great chestnut-tree : how I ever got to the spot I have been puzzling ever since to find out, yet so it was ; but is the woman mad,” he continued, perceiving her take down her lantern from the shelf, for they had now entered the house, and preparing it for use, “ can’t we go to bed without a light and the moon shining there for nothing.”

“ Dont talk of bed for these two hours,” said Suzette, “ you have been junketting often enough for your own pleasure, now stir yourself for mine.”

“ Not an inch to-night,” said Simon, with a tremendous yawn, and accompanying the declaration by commencing to loosen some part of his clothes.

“ Stop,” cried Suzette, while the poor fellow stood irresolute in his dishabille, the very picture of matrimonial subjection ;

“come with me instantly, or I’ll teach you what it is to pretend to a will of your own.”

“I pretend to nothing of the kind,” muttered Simon; “I have not had such a thing for the last fifteen years, and it seems fitter that I should not, for a bad use I made of it the last time I had it, which was, I think, when I chose you, my dear.” Suzette disregarded this speech, and having succeeded in raking a spark from among the ashes, gave him the lantern to carry, and leading the way with mighty strides, after many windings and intricacies, the loving pair reached the house of Leah Coste, and without ceremony entered the kitchen. Here Suzette left her lantern and her husband to keep company with a ragged slip of a girl, who, in waiting to light her mistress home, had fallen into a deep sleep beside the chim-

ney, and now sat open-mouthed, her arms crossed and wrapped around in her tattered apron, totally insensible to all intruders upon her privacy. Suzette herself, with the familiarity of old acquaintance, penetrated into the inner sanctorum, where Leah and her favourites sat round the card-table intent upon their game. No sooner were the ceremonials of politeness ended, than the intelligence of Isidore's appearance at the Priory burst from her lips with all the rapidity her auditors could desire, and it would be difficult to exemplify speed more happily. The unfinished deal was suspended, the cards left untouched, so horror-struck were these compassionate females at the young man's temerity or presumption, nor could they rationally account for such a step, unless indeed, as Suzette suggested, it was not willingly he had returned, and she offered to produce her

husband in support of her opinion. All agreed this was the most probable surmise, and though in general they declared that Simon's evidence, even when he was sober, was no more to be depended on than a will-o'-the-wisp in a dark night, yet they now eagerly desired his admission to confirm their suspicions. "Simon! Simon!" was vociferated in a voice that might have roused the seven sleepers of Bagdad, but no answer was returned; and on opening the door into the kitchen, the sonorous sounds that proceeded from it, gave sufficient evidence that Simon's slumbers were as firm, if not as undisturbed, as theirs. A hearty shake of the shoulder was soon more effectual, and starting up with half-muttered curses that he was allowed to sleep neither at home nor abroad, followed his wife to the expecting circle, as much dazzled with the light of one soli-



tary lamp that threw its beams upon their wizened faces, as an old patriarch owl when forced to appear in open day. No sooner had he appeared, than all began at once to attack him with their inquiries ; but so unsatisfactory was the account he gave when compared with their expectations, that the fate of Orpheus seemed impending over this matter-of-fact narrator, if it had not been for the friendly interposition of the village apothecary who was present, and who, feeling for his brother in distress, by dint of cross-questions, prompted replies ; and the charitable conclusion that the good liquor in the Priory cellar had not yet evaporated from his head, drew at length such conclusions as fully justified the ladies in determining to send Suzette early the following morning to old Madeline with the painful intelligence, lest she should hear without

due precaution that her son, or as she pretended, her adopted son, had been brought by armed force to the Priory, and doubtless ere now had suffered the punishment due to his offences. "What a pity," cried one, "she had not the sense to hold her tongue a few days longer!" "It's a fine warning," said another, "to all those who think to set themselves up, by making fools of their neighbours." "The good woman," exclaimed a third, "was always dreaming, if you remember, of his high destiny!"

Neither eloquence nor entreaties could persuade Simon to carry the information himself; with a significant shrug he declared he had heard a sermon on the last day of Lent, against meddling with other people's affairs; as for the women, it was the business of their lives, but for his part, he considered each one should follow

their vocation, and silence was his. After this charitable arrangement, the party broke up, and the apothecary with much gallantry, presenting an arm to each of the ladies who was about to retire, they departed, confirmed, by the specimen they had just seen of Simon's insubordination, in their opinion that peace and happiness were only to be found in that blessed state of celibacy which they had chosen for themselves, but which, according to others, had been forced upon them by the malice of fortune.

The extraordinary scene which had so lately occurred at the Priory of St. Roc may account in some degree for the interest which the coterie just mentioned appeared to take in the fate of Isidore. No sooner were Vespers ended, than the particulars attending the death of Father Bernardine were conveyed to Vallerargues

by several who had been present in the chapel, and were received there with the various fate that usually attends all uncommon intelligence, some treating the whole as madness, some giving it credit, and others vehemently exclaiming against it as an impudent fable. Madeline, more interested in the news than any of her neighbours, felt an instantaneous conviction flash upon her mind, that the child she had so long cherished must be the same to which the Father had alluded; and proud of what she had to communicate, hastened instantly to Madame Durand's, in order to impart the delightful information. She found that lady hesitating between fear and hope, dreading to indulge the flattering idea upon so slight a foundation, and apprehensive lest even the discovery of her long-lost nephew might, for many reasons, be a subject of

uneasiness ; but when Madeline, in the fulness of her heart, solemnly declared, that he who even as a stranger had so powerfully awakened her interest, was without doubt the same she had so long mourned as dead, her joy became almost as painful as her former suspense ; every question that could elucidate the subject was asked a hundred times, every date, each trifling particular repeated, even the casual expressions of the Pilgrim, which, at the moment they were uttered, had been heard almost with inattention, were now recalled to mind, and listened to as oracles ; it would be difficult to say whether Madame Durand was most eager in collecting, or Madeline in relating all that tended to confirm their hopes, and it appeared altogether so probable a supposition, that no words seemed strong enough to express the gratitude which

that lady felt towards the preserver of such a treasure. Madeline, almost out of her senses with joy, wept and laughed at the same moment, at one time anticipating the happiness in store for her darling ; at another lamenting the loss she should suffer of so dutiful a son, or blaming herself for a discretion which had deprived him so long of his birthright. This she could only account for, by the great influence the Pilgrim had obtained over her mind, and his frequent declaration, that the slightest hint from her might so far irritate the relations of the child confided to her care, as eventually to prove his destruction.

It is probable, that from the time he had fixed upon him as the instrument for the accomplishment of his wild schemes, Father Bernardine had been doubly studious to keep him in ignorance of his



birth, as wishing every advantage to appear dependant on his zealous performance of the part assigned him. Madeline had, however, received directions, on the moment she should hear of the Father's death, to carry a letter he had intrusted to her to Monsieur Montblanc. This paper she now gave to Madame Durand, who, on opening it, perceived, that though couched in ambiguous terms, it served to corroborate Madeline's testimony, and strengthened her belief in what she so ardently desired might prove true. The principal difficulty now was, how to act in so critical a juncture, when deprived of the counsel of any of her advisers ; she feared to take any step, lest it should lead to fresh difficulties ; her first idea, was instantly to despatch a messenger to Montpellier, to request the attendance of M. de M—, and in the

mean time she enjoined on Madeline, with many commendations of her former silence, to be careful not to mention to any one how nearly she was interested in the intelligence, which by this time formed the general subject of village gossip. Unfortunately, on the way to Madame Durand's, Madeline had passed the houses of two or three of her intimate friends, and in the first moment of her triumph, under the seal of secrecy, had poured into their astonished ears the facts which she had for so many years withheld from their knowledge; one of these was Suzette, who, provoked at the prospect of the benefits that might accrue to her neighbour, should her story be correct, was as anxious to discredit it, as if the truth rested on her belief, and that of her fellow-tattlers. The evil, however, was done, and could not be remedied. The stream once set

flowing was not to be again checked. It was an unspeakable source of thankfulness to Madame Durand, that Isidore was, at least for the present, far beyond the reach of those machinations which she doubted not the Prior would practise against one whose life so materially affected his interest, and his future fate she endeavoured to leave to the wisdom of Him, without whose providential protection he could never have escaped the perils that surrounded his infancy. It was painful at such a moment to remain entirely passive, to make no effort to establish his claims and ensure his safe return ; and Madame la Porte, in whose estimation it must be owned Isidore had assumed an additional importance from the moment Madeline announced his being the son of the Baron de Courcy, was extremely urgent for some measures being imme-

diately adopted to persuade or overawe the Prior, and proclaim the important tidings to the world ; but Madame Durand was not to be moved from the precaution which her fears dictated ; she preferred the delay of a few days, which must secure the return of Monsieur la Porte, or the arrival of M. de M—; and thus, in her anxiety not to be too precipitate, unintentionally emboldened the Prior, by the hope of acting in secrecy, to attempt the nefarious scheme which he had so nearly succeeded in.

After some hours of such delightful conversation, Madeline rose to depart, resolved on again practising her wonted discretion, so as neither by acquiescing or denying to let any one know more than she had already inconsiderately revealed, and Madame Durand and Rose separated for the night, in that state of mind which

is the agitating result of unexpected pleasure. It may be doubted whether that of Rose was as perfect as she could have desired ; the human heart is the theatre of strange contradictions, and perhaps a thought might intrude itself into her breast, of the vast disproportion which a few moments had created between her and Isidore, and an unacknowledged apprehension of the effect it would have on his behaviour towards her ; but if this weakness for a few instants prevailed, who will not pardon it who feels how far above every other privilege is that of contributing to the happiness of those we love best ! Thus situated, they were impatiently, though vainly, waiting for the arrival of Monsieur la Porte, when the unexpected information brought by Simon gave Suzette and the rest of her friends such an opportunity of crushing what they

looked upon as Madeline's brilliant air-built castles, as it was not in their nature to neglect. Never was Suzette known to be more alert in performing the household duties that would have detained her at home, than on the morning destined for this kind communication. On her arrival at Madeline's cottage, she found the good woman seated quietly at her work, reflecting, as far as her faculties would admit of such an exercise, on the various turns of fortune, and considering whether her child, as she still delighted to call Isidore, had not enjoyed as large a share of happiness while sheltered by her tenderness and care, though amidst the penury and deprivations of her humble state, as if brought up in the grandeur to which he was born, and exposed to the storms that seemed to threaten his youth.

Suzette seated herself with the most



provoking *sang froid*, and began a thousand remarks on some trifling alterations which had been made in the room ; nay, she had the force of mind to take out her stocking and commence knitting, with a zeal that seemed to indicate she had left her own house for no other purpose but to continue, undisturbed, this notable piece of housewifery. Poor Madeline was not a little astonished ; it seemed to her that it was impossible to utter a sentence which did not relate to Isidore, and that Suzette, her ancient friend and gossip, so noted for the interest she took in every body's concerns, to whom she had voluntarily confided her secret, could not spare one word of inquiry or congratulation, was almost past belief ; but so it was, and she was at length obliged to lead to the subject herself.

“ Ah !” said Suzette, with a deep sigh,

“ I should not have mentioned the poor young man, if you had not done so first ; but tell me, my good Madeline, is it likely to be quite so bad as I have heard ? ”

“ Bad ! ” exclaimed Madeline, not knowing whether to be alarmed or angry, “ you strangely mistake the matter, what is there so bad in exchanging the situation of my son for a Barony, and a rich one, too, into the bargain ? ”

“ That is something, to be sure,” said Suzette, “ but I never heard that a Baron felt the rope round his neck a whit less than the meanest of us.”

“ I don’t understand you, neighbour,” said Madeline, somewhat ruffled ; “ it’s too late in the day to come to me with your stories, for you may be sure, whatever others think, I know the truth.”

“ But not the whole truth, Madeline,” continued the persevering newsmonger ;

“those who heard it, would perhaps be slow in bringing it to you ; may be you’d have given them the mark of your ten nails, by way of a receipt.”

“As you did, I suppose,” retorted Madeline, “when Alix Causse found your golden nest egg, and Simon carried off all your scrapings and savings to the Ball Alley.”

“And if I did,” answered Suzette, “all the world knows I lost more than than you ever had to lose ; it’s ill scraping a bare bone, and your good man was as safe from being pilfered as a plucked pigeon ; if he’d had an honest penny in the world, do you think he’d have let you take in a beggar’s brat and bring him up, as you have done, to be hanged on the gallows for murder and rebellion ?”

“If I was not in my own house,” cried Madeline, her eyes sparkling with rage, “I’d tell you that’s a lie.”

“ And I,” cried Suzette, “ can tell you it’s a fact, that last night your puppet of a Baron was brought to the Priory by a guard with muskets cocked and swords drawn, handcuffed and gagged, and that the Intendant only remained there to pronounce such a sentence on him as he richly deserves. Those who saw it, counted twenty soldiers and more about him, for it was proper that such a grand gentleman should be led in state on coming to his honours. Ha ! ha ! ha ! ”

“ No one ever saw such a sight,” cried Madeline, “ it’s all your own wicked invention, for you’re jealous of my good luck : my child is safe beyond sea, and he’ll come back to make you all repent.”

“ Why surely it’s beneath the notice of a Baron,” said Suzette, “ to turn his thoughts upon one so insignificant as I am ; I didn’t think you’d have taught him so much malice.”

“ I taught him nothing but what was good,” exclaimed Madeline, “ as time will show, but I’m a fool for listening any longer to your falsities ; I’ll go this moment to Madame Durand, and if you have been making game of me——”

“ If I have,” replied Suzette, “ it will be so much the better for you ; you’d never be able to hold up your head again, neighbour ; you’d go by the name of the Baron’s nurse to the end of your days, and one would not have the name without the gain.” Meanwhile Madeline was hastily putting on her tereisse, and arranging her shawl, compressing her lips with the tightness of a screw, for fear of being tempted to prolong so unsatisfactory a controversy ; then flinging open the door, she set out with the utmost speed, without waiting to turn the key, and followed by Suzette, who kept vociferating as long as she was in sight, “ good

speed to your errand; shall I order out the hautboys for you?" and, turning to her own house, recommenced her daily task of bustling, threatening, and scolding, with renewed alacrity. Scarcely had Madeline reached Madame Durand's, and seated herself in the kitchen to recover her breath and temper, than the first person she perceived was Gaspard, who had only on that morning reached Vallerargues, and, thinking it too early to announce his arrival, was quietly regaling himself with what he found ready at hand.

The sight of him was a shock against which Madeline was but little prepared; his unexpected return seemed a sad confirmation of the intelligence she had just received, and treated with so much scorn. With a faint voice she asked for Isidore. "Isidore," said Gaspard, "have you not seen him; has he not been here?" and



his look of surprise increased her uneasiness. Unable to account satisfactorily to himself for this delay, and unwilling, by confessing his own apprehensions, to add to her alarm, Gaspard hesitated in his replies to her questions, and seemed so little disposed to speak the truth, that Madeline's exclamations that she was sure her child was betrayed and lost, reached the ears of Madame Durand, who sent Rose down to inquire into the cause of her grief. The sight of Gaspard explained this but too well, and he was at length forced to confess that he suspected some mischief must have befallen Isidore, as he had parted from him with the intention of going to the Priory, and, according to their different modes of travelling, he might have been with them the night before. It would be useless to repeat the distress of Madeline, expressed with all

the vehemence of her countrywomen, or to dwell on the deeper, though more silent grief of Madame Durand, who, on hearing of his having imprudently trusted himself into the hands of his mortal enemy, seemed to sink at once under the blow which crushed her new-born hopes. Rose, though divided between the anguish of her own feelings and her terror at the state to which she saw Madame Durand reduced by such a shock, was happily superior to the selfish weakness that often renders sensibility the greatest impediment to usefulness. She despatched a messenger instantly for medical assistance, and determined to send Gaspard in search of her father, and Madeline herself to the Priory, a step which Madame Durand warmly approved. There seemed little chance of persuading the Prior to surrender Isidore without compulsion, since,

upon whatever pretence he had seized him, he was doubtless detained from some intimation he had received that pointed him out as his sister's child. They had no hesitation in attributing this to Lebrun, and suspecting that, seduced by the Prior's gold, he had, by his plausibility and art, betrayed the too confiding Isidore into the snare. Their only hope rested on the Intendant, who, if applied to in time, would doubtless, from that love of justice and generosity of sentiment for which he was characterized, strenuously exert himself to prevent any mischief from taking place. It was to him, therefore, that Madame Durand dictated a letter, which Rose wrote with a trembling hand, and, confiding it to the care of Madeline, the good woman set out with such strict directions as they hoped, if correctly followed, would secure its safe delivery to

the Count. Happily she almost immediately met with one of the Count's attendants, and mixing entreaties with bribes, after a short delay was introduced into his master's presence.

On entering the apartment, the first object she beheld was Monsieur la Porte seated beside the Count. To the simple flock over which he presided, the presence and counsel of their pastor were always a support and consolation, and Madeline felt her apprehensions diminish at the sight. Encouraged by the Count's friendly reception, she delivered her letter, told her plain tale, and after enlarging on the dangers which she imagined Isidore must run, begged some step might instantly be taken, or their interference would be too late. The good woman would have found it difficult to meet with two persons more willing to second her wishes, and

indeed the cause of her visit formed the subject of their conversation when she entered. Monsieur la Porte had been present with the Count at Nismes, when on his arrival from Paris, Monsieur Montblanc had given up to him the papers confided to his care by Father Bernardine, and from the contents of several which they had perused, a strong conviction arose in his mind that his young favourite, though hitherto no doubt had been entertained of his parentage, was in reality what he was there represented, and by his partial eulogiums on Isidore, the Count was greatly prepossessed in his favour, and induced to exert himself in his defence. Unfortunately La Porte, learning on his return to Vallerargues, the report generally spread of Isidore's having fallen at the commencement of the attack against the insurgent peasantry,

and fearful of raising hopes which might so soon be blasted, had cautiously avoided mentioning the important intelligence to Madame Durand, and thinking it better to go himself in search of him, he had set out as mentioned before, under pretence of making inquiries respecting the truth of the late affair. Dejected at the fruitlessness of his search, he was returning slowly home, when he was met by a messenger whom the Count had despatched the moment he returned to his apartment, after hearing the dying confession of Father Bernardine, who, without allowing him to pass through Vallerargues, had secretly introduced him into the Priory, where he was at this moment consulting with the Count as to what was safest to be done. Great, therefore, was their astonishment, on finding from Madeline's account, that Isidore had arrived



the night before from Cette, and was perhaps at that moment still in the Priory. The Count determined to repair instantly to the Prior's apartment, and convince him he could no longer hope to carry on his schemes in secrecy, but his arrival would probably have been too late, had not the delay occasioned by the accident that happened to Constant, compelled him to retard their execution for some hours. It was only by exerting his authority, and using every means of persuasion, that the Count at length succeeded in obtaining admission to the Prior's presence, nor without gaining on the way such an insight into his host's intentions as made him shudder at the risk his young protégé had run.

But we must now return to the party thus strangely assembled in the deserted apartment of the Priory. The pleasure

which Isidore derived from the presence of his two friends was greatly diminished by the account which Madeline gave of Madame Durand's health; his impatience to go to her was extreme; and, interrupting the Count, who was once more endeavouring to soften the Prior in his favour, he declared he must be allowed instantly to depart, as no considerations were sufficiently important to detain him at a time when his presence might prove a comfort to one he so highly valued. "What," exclaimed the Count, "go before you have given your consent; think of your father, my young friend; have you a right to sport thus with his property for the sake of a few boyish fancies?"

"The law sanctions my claim to be acknowledged as his son," said Isidore; "as for the wealth attached to that pri-

vilege, if I find it has not also the power to secure it to me, my own arm shall win me a competency, or I will rest content without: for noble blood a man must be indebted to others, but every other advantage he may derive from himself."

"I fear," replied the Count, half vexed, "your heroics are but a bad road to pre-eminence: you had better be advised by those wiser and older than yourself."

"In any other point," answered Isidore respectfully, "but now I have not even time for discussion. Accept my thanks, my lord, for your friendly interference and intentions: there are, I conclude, no further questions which my friends could answer?"

"No," said the Count, "the Prior has declared himself satisfied with the evidence I have brought; it is not necessary to call upon them now."

Isidore was about to retire, when the Prior rising with all the sternness natural to him, arrested his steps. "One moment, young man," he exclaimed; "half measures will not do for me; before you leave this room declare finally, will you win my favour by renouncing your heretical errors?"

"No," answered Isidore, firmly, "nor the favour of any man living."

"Then," replied the Prior, "you see, Count, I have done the utmost that could be required of me! therefore," drawing a crucifix from his bosom, "in the presence of all who now hear me, I relinquish all my title to the wealth you thus despise to that community of which I am an unworthy member; the world shall judge of my disinterestedness, and beware, rash youth, how you henceforward presume to lay an unjust claim on what is thus so-

lemnly dedicated. You shall find that, though despised by worldlings, we are not quite destitute of power. The profane interference of laymen into affairs beyond their cognizance I resist; the sanction of parliament where the church has once pronounced her sentence I protest against. Anathemas, formerly so powerful, have not lost their efficacy; if the thunder sleeps for a moment, her peals return with redoubled violence, and the audacity of our enemies is no mark of our weakness, but rather a prelude to their own destruction. Flatter not yourself that the time for these things is past; the church can never decay; her vigour is immortal, and as her decisions are unerring, what she has once pronounced cannot be disannulled. We admit of no unsanctified unions, human laws are incapable of establishing them. Receive

this as my final decision, and learn that every resource, every effort, every talent, I can master, shall be willingly employed in establishing these truths upon a basis that the feeble clamour of infidels and scoffers shall not be able to shake."

The Count was at the first moment astonished; he had hoped that, at least, some compromise might have been made, and little expected a determination so absolute: he knew well how difficult it would be for a heretic, who was at best only tolerated in the land, to wrest his property from so firm a grasp, or to oppose individual strength to the united force of a body that felt itself safe only while it was superior to all control. Isidore, however, maintained his composure, and calmly replied, "If you have a right thus to defraud me, you need fear no attack



on my part ; if you have not, remember I am no more to be terrified by empty threats than misled by empty offers ;” then, bowing respectfully to the Count, he withdrew with M. la Porte, without waiting a reply.

Madeline, who followed them out of the room, having imperfectly understood the affair, was loud in her commendations of her noble boy, for letting no one make a black papist of him, and Lebrun, glad of such an opportunity to escape his expected view of the Priory dungeons, lost every other consideration in joy, at being again free.

As the door closed after them, the Count exclaimed, “ A fine-spirited young man, however ; he carries a tinge of bigotry off as well as most. You cannot surely be serious, Prior ; I must say I

rather wonder at your taste, and should prefer such an heir to the fat lazy drones, who, in successive generations, will sleep away their existence in this Convent, and laugh at your generosity, as they drink to your memory out of the produce of your benefaction. But shaven crowns and hypocritical faces may be more to your taste, and if so, you do right to manure well the soil that produces them.”

“ Count,” replied the Prior, with well-affected indignation, “ worldly eyes are blind, except to worldly interests. A profane soldier, such as I fear you are, might be allowed to overlook the unpardonable sin in those near and dear to you, but the honour of the church is every thing to me. I must now prepare for Vespers ; will you attend me there ? We have both need to atone for some irregu-

larities of speech, and vehemence of temper. I will then draw up the deed of assignment, and by to-morrow's sun, shall be able to bid defiance to all intruders on my rights."

---

CHAPTER XI.

---

To form fallacious schemes of joy,  
To wish and hope we know not what ;  
To see reality destroy  
Such phantoms, is a common lot.

But while beholding others blest,  
To feel no vain regrets intrude,  
Convinced that heaven has ordered best,  
Is cause of sober gratitude.

---

BARTON.

ON leaving the Prior's presence, Monsieur la Porte requested Isidore's company for a few moments in the Count's apartment, where they were shortly after joined by that nobleman. He was anxious to deliver up the documents which had been intrusted to him, as well as to renew his promise of exerting every effort, not only

to attempt compelling the Prior to yield to the decree of the parliament, but even to make him suffer for his obstinacy, should he still prove refractory. Isidore, though grateful for his offers, was yet averse to attempting any compulsory measures, especially as he found himself totally unequal to the expense that would attend a litigation ; the Count was, however, not easily to be prevented from using some endeavours, and informing him, that as particular affairs would require his presence immediately at Montpellier, where he hoped, by consulting with M. de M—, to obtain some advice respecting the best mode of proceeding ; he promised to visit Vallerargues on his return to Nismes, and dismissed him with Madeline and Lebrun, again repeating the assurances of his friendship, whatever might be the result of his endeavours.

Notwithstanding Isidore's impatience to hasten on, he was constrained to suit his pace to the steps of his companion, who, at best, not the most alert of foot, was now more than usually impeded by want of breath, occasioned by her never-ending remarks on the scene she had just witnessed, the events that had given rise to it, and the probable consequences that would ensue. These were copiously intermingled with exclamations at her own good fortune, in having been chosen for so important a task as nourishing the young heir of De Courcy, and no small degree of self-gratulation, on having instilled such good principles into his tender mind, as it appeared no worldly temptations could shake.

Her eloquence seemed to flow from so inexhaustible a source, that it was with some difficulty Isidore could prevail on



her to leave him, occasionally, to those reflections of gratitude which the review of the late occurrences so loudly called for, and to the consideration of the new duties that were imposed upon him by this change in his circumstances, each of which opened a fresh source of happiness; his imagination planning a long series of uninterrupted joys, dwelt alternately on his marriage with Rose, to which no obstacle could now exist, on the recovery of Madame Durand, and their union round his father's dwelling, from whence it would be the care of all to chase that despondency to which he had been so long a prey; even the Baron de Courcy's return to his ancient home seemed not impossible to the ingenuity of that faculty before which every difficulty in a moment vanishes: nor was Madeline forgotten in this dream of delight; while listening to her

warm and artless expressions of affection, Isidore secretly resolved, nothing should ever deprive her of her son, and that whatever fortune he might possess, she should share with him; yet he could scarcely forbear smiling at the mixture of accustomed familiarity and newly-acquired respect, which formed so whimsical a contrast in her manner as they walked along.

It was a lovely evening, and the purple light of the setting sun diffused its warmth of colouring over every object. The vines were bending under the rich load of their luxuriant fruit, and far as the circling hills, their spreading branches clothed the ground. In front, the proud towers of the castle of his ancestors rose above the surrounding woods, and the gilded outline strongly marked against the blue sky, formed a commanding foreground to the soft shadowy distance of the plains below. There

was no sound of flocks, no heavy trains bearing along the road the produce of the harvest, all would have been silent, but for the whistle of the vine-dresser returning from his work, or the labourer cheering on, with his appropriate cry, the sober animal which had conveyed him and his implements of husbandry to the far-distant spot of ground he had been cultivating; all appeared happy at returning to the welcome family reunion and the repose of the night, and saluted the party as they passed, with that curiosity which the reports of the preceding days were so well calculated to excite.

On drawing nearer to Vallerargues, Madeline suddenly retired behind her young lord, to the respectful distance which Lebrun had hitherto kept alone, until Isidore, though amused at the manœuvre, insisted on her preceding him,

as, according to village etiquette, for which she had always been a warm advocate, had, in former days, been their order of march. After some dispute, she was compelled to yield, and entered the village, bridling with conscious pleasure, and winking significantly to all they met, with a look of mingled pride and condescension. Such was the triumphant entry of the heir of the house of De Courcy, to the place where his ancestors had ruled with almost princely power and magnificence ; but the kind-hearted people amongst whom he returned did not exclusively pay respect to exterior pomp ; if their sympathy was not despised, it was readily bestowed on the poor as well as the rich, and the low bows and expressions of welcome and congratulation which he received, were more sincere, and infinitely more flattering than the

vacant wonder and admiration of the crowds that hang round the chariot-wheels of their wealthy superiors.

Nothing, however, could engross Isidore's attention, or calm his emotion, as he drew near Madame Durand's house, which he had left under circumstances of so much anxiety. The mingled feelings that rushed at once to his heart were more than he could master, and he was forced, on entering, to seat himself with Lebrun, while Madeline hastened upstairs, to announce his arrival. Here he remained some time, listening to every sound, and fondly hoping to distinguish each footstep that crossed the room overhead, and to catch every whisper that should be uttered. Short as was Madeline's absence, it seemed hours before he heard her careful foot descending, and he almost imagined her step was more

than usually slow in coming, and that it was unwillingness to communicate bad news which retarded her. Isidore had desired the good woman to proceed with caution, and instead of telling her news with the abruptness, which, in the fulness of her heart she had intended, to call some one from Madame Durand's room, who might gradually break it to her. After standing some minutes at the door, making vainly the most significant signs, she had at length caught Rose's eye, and beckoned her out. Rose, who had waited her return from the Priory with painful impatience, eagerly obeyed the summons, and, though unable to speak, her inquiring looks sufficiently betrayed her anxiety. Madeline, putting her arms around her neck, to bring the listener's ear to a level with her mouth, in a whisper, which she endeavoured to render low, begged her



instantly to follow her—"For I've got him," she added, "safe and sound, and as loving and lovely as ever."

'Got who? dear Madeline,' said Rose, endeavouring to disengage herself from the friendly grasp, and to overcome the agitation which this intelligence excited.

"Why, my boy—that I should presume to call him so!" replied the delighted Madeline.

"Then," said Rose, "I will call my mother, she is only at the other side of the bed, and is the best person to—to——."

"Fiddle faddle!" exclaimed Madeline, in a tone now raised to a more angry pitch, "and do you think he's so fond of old women, that he wouldn't have been content with my company, if that was all? I was young once, my child, and I know the tricks of the young ones."

“ But,” replied Rose, with some hesitation, “ perhaps if he only wishes to hear of Madame Durand, he might better see my mother—I mean to say that now—that——.”

“ Oh ! you think he’s changed,” exclaimed Madeline, somewhat softened.

“ Did he ask for me ?” said Rose, still drawing back her hand, which she was, however, not sorry to have detained.

“ What if he did not say so in as many words,” answered Madeline, “ the eyes, you know, can speak to those who are not blind ; and, besides, you need not fear that he’s grown grand, for I can tell you, though he is a great Baron’s son, he’s as humble as ever, and will no more mind your father being a poor Pastor, than he does my having on my worst petticoat and bodice, that ought to have been given to the beggars long ago ; notwithstand-

ing which, he made me lean on his arm, I know not how far."

This was an unfortunate observation, and Rose snatched away her hand with a quickness, that had nearly thrown old Madeline, who was standing on the top step, off her equilibrium. We are very often extremely humble in the secret of our own bosoms, and form a correct judgment of the matter in question ; but there are points on which we do not like to be told we are in the right, and in which contradiction is acceptable. Rose had rationally concluded, that in the eye of the world, she was no longer equal to Isidore, and she could not adopt the erroneous doctrine that love levels all distinctions, but to be told by Madeline, that he who had hitherto looked up to her, as a slave to his mistress, as subject to his sovereign, would now *condescend* not to

throw her off, this was more than woman's heart could brook, and pride checked every other feeling ; even her grief for Madame Durand's danger, which had till now bathed her face with incessant tears, was for the moment forgotten. Poor Madeline, sufficiently quicksighted to perceive something was going wrong, though unable to imagine it was occasioned by what in her opinion ought to have excited so much satisfaction, was becoming more clamorous in her remonstrances, and already Madame la Porte had been heard to inquire who was talking so loud ; Rose, whose anger was like the passing cloud in an April's day, was shocked at herself for suffering her sensitiveness to get the better of her at such a time, and to put an end to the dispute, with a beating heart, and yet disturbed countenance, prepared to follow Madeline, “ I've brought her at

last," exclaimed the latter, as soon as she had closed the kitchen door, "and a hard matter it was, I promise you."

"Hard to persuade Rose to come down to me?" said Isidore, with a half incredulous smile, as he took her hand; but a momentary glance convinced him she was not quite wrong in her declaration.

Having first satisfied himself from Madeline, that Madame Durand, though extremely weak, was not considered in immediate danger, he again turned his whole attention to Rose, and her's was not a countenance that could conceal what passed within from his penetrating eye. There he saw the faint flush of vexation, the look averted with affected indifference, and the lips closed, as if afraid of expressing what she was ashamed to own. Isidore knew better than to ask for an explanation, and he needed it not; he had not for so many

years studied that face and that heart with all the devotion with which the scholar pores over his books, without being able to read every passing thought ; “ You are unjust, Rose,” he at length said, “ and you cannot point out in my conduct, a single action that should lead you to think so meanly of me. In my behaviour towards others, I may have committed a thousand faults, but to you, I can truly say I am blameless, and that my love has ever been undiminished by time and circumstances. Do you think so highly of rank, or so meanly of me, that you suspect it is become my idol ? Have a care,” he continued with a smile, “ that you do not thus betray your own weakness, and that I am not led to think, that while I was but a poor peasant, you secretly prided yourself on your condescension to one so much beneath you.”



“ Oh !” exclaimed Rose, eagerly, “ you cannot surely suppose that !”

“ No,” replied Isidore, “ I think more justly of you. Do me the same justice ; do not degrade yourself, by degrading him whom you have honoured as the object of your choice.” Rose colouring still more deeply, looked down for some time ; at last raising her eyes, she said, with a smile and a look of perfect confidence, “ Forgive me, Isidore, for I confess I was wrong.”

“ You were, indeed,” he replied, pressing her hand to his lips.

“ But,” said Rose, for woman can never finish an argument without that most excellent and useful monosyllable—“ Madeline vexed me, by saying so much of your condescension.”

“ Madeline is a good woman,” said Isidore, “ but not a good reasoner ; she

should have said I had no right to be condescending to you, for will not our obligations through life be mutual? Believe me, my dear Rose, even in the midst of grandeur there are cares, which only a heart like yours can enter into and console; let us therefore be convinced that our happiness depends on each other, and by perfect confidence be prepared with double force to bear up against whatever we may meet with in life. Dark clouds still remain, whatever you may think of my prosperity: could you but know the worth of such affection as your's, you would not have suspected all the world can offer was sufficient to make me for an instant undervalue it. Ours will be no transient union, but rendered more delightful by the very thought that it cannot be broken; our friends are often separated from us by distance, or the

fickleness even of friendship ; our parents we naturally expect to lose, but *we* may hope to tread every step of life together ; or, if it is possible, that one should survive the loss of the other, it will be but to pass through years of sorrow, consoled by the memory of the past and the hope of the future.” Rose could only reply by one of those eloquent looks which speak more forcibly than words ; the circumstances under which they again met had rendered them serious without diminishing their joy. But a more immediate concern called for Isidore’s attention, and Rose having gently informed Madame Durand of his arrival, and received directions that he should instantly come to her, she accompanied him to her bed-side. It was impossible that he should not feel a momentary shock on beholding the ravages that disease had so rapidly made in her

appearance. The paleness of death was on her face ; her half-closed eyes had lost their wonted brilliancy, and the dark shadows which surrounded them gave a hollow look to all the features. Oh ! what a wreck is man before he is, “ taken away to be no more seen ! ” how true is it, that his beauty “ consumes away, like a moth fretting a garment.” In the wasted form we look in vain for the ever-varying charms that seemed as if they could never fly ; without the flush of life, that structure of which he is so proud, and which he takes so much pains to adorn, is excelled even by the inanimate block which the skill of the sculptor shapes into a mimic image, and the face, once fair as the visions that float in the poet’s dream, must yield to mere marble. Madame Durand turned her head as she heard Isidore approach ; the pleasure that

animated her countenance made the feeble pulse throb with a momentary vigour, but her weakness was so great that she fainted away, exhausted by the effort to fold him to her heart, and the words “ My child, welcome my long-lost child ! ” seemed the last she was to utter. The assiduous cares, however, of her friends soon restored her to animation, and she was enabled to listen with some composure to the particulars of his visit to the Priory, and the base subterfuges employed by the Prior to defraud him of his rights. But indignation, even at such conduct, found no room in a bosom where all angry passions had died away ; her heart was filled with love, and the unexpected restoration of the child she had so deeply mourned, restored to all that his father’s affection could desire, was a happiness quite sufficient to gild the last days of her earthly course, and to counterba-



lance any opposition that the malice of his enemy might raise. Nor could she be satisfied without sending for Lebrun, and after apologizing for her unfounded suspicions, and thanking him with a gratitude to which he was but little accustomed for the part he had taken in bringing about so joyful an event, promising him such a recompense as his services merited, and which, in the event of her decease, she commissioned Rose to secure to him. Poor Rose could bear any thing but this calm, certain reference to her death, and Madame Durand, who perceived her distress, drawing her tenderly towards her, gently reproached her young friend for wishing to detain her in a world of so much pain. “ Am I,” she said, “ alone to be punished with immortality upon earth ; have the bright visions of futurity been held out only to deceive me ? ”



“Yet,” replied Rose, faintly, “at such a moment, when every thing seems to contribute so largely to your happiness—”

“My child,” replied Madame Durand, “the greatest earthly happiness is but a shadow, and I now look for the substance. Yet think not I would check the buoyancy of your youthful hopes, or that I have turned with cynic’s eye from every pleasure this world has offered me; on the contrary, I remembered we were commanded to rejoice evermore; and when I saw so much beauty spread everywhere around me; when I experienced the charms of intellectual enjoyment, I learnt that we were not sent into the world to be miserable, but rather to be happy, in the way of God’s appointment. The time, however, for this is past with me, and when the faculty of enjoyment is withdrawn, it is vain to stimulate

it with new incitements ; the smile may play on the lips, but the heart will still be sad." While she spoke, they heard the approaching sound of music, the hurrying of footsteps, and busy noise of tongues, as if cheerful, thoughtless crowds were drawing near to the house. Rose, to whom the idea of mirth at such a moment was little less than sacrilege, turned her imploring eyes on Isidore, who instantly rose for the purpose of entreating the revellers to direct their course another way, but Madame Durand desired first to be informed of the cause of their rejoicings, and Lebrun, who still stood in one corner of the room, vainly endeavouring to suppress the unwonted sensibility that overcame him, conjectured it was the villagers coming to wish their young lord joy, for he had heard one of the neighbours talk of it to Madeline, who had forbidden it in a

manner that was not intended to be very authoritative. Madame Durand, ever mindful of the feelings of others, and pleased with this mark of attention from those who had nothing else to offer, would on no account dispense with Isidore's appearing to them, and with a heavy heart he left the room. As he opened the house-door to meet his kind-hearted friends, the shrill tones of the hautboys reached his ear, and the well-known sounds which had often waked him to mirth and gaiety, contrasted so forcibly with the scene he had just quitted, that wild and discordant as their melody was, it rather served to increase his melancholy. Poor Madeline, if one so self-satisfied could be pitied, was amongst the foremost of the troop, and Simon Chas, whose pipe was always played in honour of whoever was for the time lord of the ascendant, was not far

behind ; even Leah Coste, though little accustomed to join in the festivities of the villagers, had contrived to be present, under the plea of observing how the young rustic would act the gentleman. When they reached the house, an appropriate chorus in their native dialect 'announced the cause of their visit, and the loud hurrah was about to follow, but Isidore, unable any longer to command his feelings, entreated them to cease, and in simple, yet grateful terms, expressing his thanks, reminded them how distressing all music must be to Madame Durand. "Is the lady very ill?" exclaimed several voices at once.

"We fear so," said Isidore, with much emotion. There was instantly silence, interrupted only by murmurs of compassion and condolence, nor did even the meanest there seem to regret his interrupted sport ;

it was quite natural to these poor people that sickness and sorrow should be considered sacred, and they prepared to retire with a degree of quietness that indicated real feeling. Isidore distributed what money he had about him, promising if Madame Durand recovered, their rejoicings should only be deferred to be rendered more complete, and all returned to their homes, ready with happy philosophy to substitute the pleasures of anticipation for those of reality. It is true that three or four old gossips lingered behind to accompany Madeline into the house, judging that some of the party might want a little cheering under the general depression which reigned there, but as each had for sixty or seventy years pursued the same system, it was not to be expected that an instantaneous change should be wrought in their ideas and

habits, or that at that late period of life, when the mind rarely receives new impressions, these good ladies could learn that real grief is not to be scared away with chattering and merriment like the ghosts and hobgoblins, who lurk only in darkness and solitude ; we must therefore be content, like Isidore, to leave them in peaceable possession of the kitchen, busying themselves with a thousand trifles that had better have been left undone, and imagining they were pursuing a most neighbourly line of conduct, which, like much that is called disinterested charity, they contrived to make its own reward. No persuasions could induce Rose, her mother, or Isidore, to leave Madame Durand's room during the night. Exhausted as she found herself, there was so much to be said, so many recollections of the past crowded upon her mind, so many directions and counsels were to be



given for the future, that it was late before her eyes closed in a feverish and broken slumber. As her friends sat silently watching round her bed, they could not but own the privilege of the charge they exercised. There is a sacred feeling in the chamber of sickness and death, which is with difficulty understood except by those who have experienced it. The god of this world seems there at once to have lost his deceitful charm, we are struck with his want of power, and the sceptre falls from his hand as well as the mask from his face. It is there we learn the weakness of all those ties which bound the imprisoned soul to earth ; the flowery bands of pleasure wither, the firmer links of friendship fail, the golden chain of love is snapped asunder ; nor are the tyrant passions, that seemed to exert a force never to be overcome, of more enduring power ; what then avail

ambition, envy, and revenge? We look round, and perceive that nothing can stand against such a moment, or delay its coming! Oh! the horror, the dismay, if hope also flies; the anguish, the despair, if religion is not near to reign unfading, and secure our every wreck; in the bustle and the stir of life, men are often alike indifferent to her presence or her absence; but when the veil is about to be rent for ever, there is nothing else on which the soul can rest. An infidel cannot boast in death; he may, like the drugged slave of eastern despotism, be so intoxicated by the stupifying effects of his own principles, as to be insensible to his danger, and rush headlong upon an unknown existence, to escape the weariness of uncertainty; but call not this courage! Could he brave the danger if he had sense left to believe in it? I envy not such heroes

in the dark ; in their “ blindness to the future,” they only emulate the strength of mind of the poor animal when

Pleased to the last, it crops the flowery food,  
And licks the hand just rais'd to shed its blood.

You who despise what you cannot understand, stop in your wild career to contemplate the death-bed of a Christian. Whence think you is it, that while all around are weeping, a smile plays upon her pale face, that while they compassionate the agonies she endures, she triumphs over them, and feels a joy the world can “ neither give nor take away.” Oh ! it is that the gates of Paradise already play upon her faded cheek—the never-ending light of glory that pours upon her closing eye—the ecstasy which human language was not formed to express, nor human senses to imagine, that fills her trembling soul beyond what the most ardent imagi-

nation can conceive ! The mourners see the monster Death already pointing his dart, and with his withering touch, blasting what was fairest and dearest in their sight, *she* beholds the choirs of angelic forms, the radiant clouds, the golden harps, the winged cherubims, waiting to receive her, and far beyond all, the Redeemer mild and merciful even in his awful majesty, who claims her as his own, his purchased one. If this be true, infidel, would you not desire to experience it, if it were not true, would not even the hope of its reality be worth all the gay dreams which rise in your vivid fancy like the bubbles in the stream, shine for a moment and then burst *for ever* !

The physician who attended Madame Durand, did not pronounce her danger to be immediate ; he had simply given it as his opinion, that her constitution was too

much weakened to bear up against this last attack, and that notwithstanding the effect which the certainty of Isidore's safety seemed at first to produce, it was folly to indulge in a hope which must end in disappointment. If Madame Durand expressed a wish with respect to herself, it was, that she might survive the return of Monsieur Brunel from Montpellier, which Andore, on his arrival, had informed them would be delayed no longer than the execution of the law on his unhappy grandson. From him she had still many interesting particulars to learn, and to him she hoped to intrust the care of accompanying Isidore to his father, and of clearing from his mind whatever doubts might yet remain respecting the truth of the circumstances that had been revealed by Father Bernardine. During this solemn interval, snatched as it were from death,



when freed from every human passion and feverish anticipation, she seemed to have nothing more to do on earth, than, like the glorified spirits, to execute works of love; Madame Durand was continually making arrangements for the comfort and happiness of those connected with her ; her first care was for Louise, who now become insensible to every thing but the kindness shown her, was committed till her father's return to the care of Jeannette; she received her as a sacred charge, and Andore, when he beheld the sunken cheek and faltering step of his beloved child, even rejoiced that a duty could thus be provided for her, in the performance of which she would be continually consoled with the certainty of fulfilling the dearest wish of him she had so fondly and so fatally loved. Gaspard was to return to his native mountains, amply rewarded



for his zeal, and Lebrun, so earnestly requested to be allowed permission still to attend his young master, as he called Isidore, that it was readily granted ; and Madame Durand, whose dying counsels seemed to have made some impression on his hitherto careless mind, could not but hope a situation more respectable might prove the means of rescuing him from a course of life by which he had already been plunged into so much vice ; in short, none whom she could advise or assist were forgotten, and she whose sufferings occupied the attention of all around her, appeared indifferent only to herself. Monsieur la Porte had been constantly with the Intendant, till the moment of his departure for Montpellier, but he brought no hope of any change of sentiments on the part of the Prior.

Proud of his inflexibility, and equally

unwilling to yield when his concessions could only injure himself, as if the most sacred promises bound him to the support of others, he remained still determined to maintain his claims through all the difficulties which his more clear-sighted legal adviser pointed out to him. There were several circumstances that favoured this headstrong humour, but happily, others more powerful counteracted them, and whilst he was strengthening himself in his obstinacy, silently, though surely, opposed its effects. Even later than the middle of the eighteenth century, the edicts which had been pronounced against the Protestants, and which were still suspended over them, by a thread as slender as that which upheld the sword of Damocles, had so much influence on their conduct, that in the part of France we are speaking of, only two or three of that persuasion

had ventured to expend their wealth in the acquisition of landed property, and these held it in fear and apprehension.

The Prior, whose policy was deep, but not extensive in its views, saw what was passing around him, and formed his judgment from the timid march pursued by those immediately under his eye ; he could not believe, that one of that sect, an exile too, and for that very reason forced to have recourse to the counsels and assistance of distant advisers, would presume to enter into a contest with one who had so many means not only of opposing him, but of lengthening out the struggle ; and as his aim was in every way to distress his adversary, even granting that he was ultimately defeated, he hoped to be able, by artful procrastinations, to succeed at least in this. But he was unable, from the retreat to which he had for so many

years confined himself, to contemplate the light that was now gradually arising upon the world, and which must necessarily be long in penetrating within the walls of a provincial monastery.

It was under the deceiving effects of this ignorance that he resolved and acted, nor was it therefore much to be wondered at, if his unjust projects, which could only succeed during the night of ignorance, completely failed. The Count de St. Romain had marked the changes that were taking place more accurately ; he knew, that as the shades of darkness passed away, men could discern innumerable errors and abuses, of which, till then, they had had no conception. He wished that these could be removed as soon as discovered, for he also foresaw, should an effort be made to support or retain them, how dreadful would be the shock of that

fury with which the newly-awakened multitude would arouse themselves from their long slumber. Many wise and good men, who entertained the same opinions, were anxiously employed in leading the minds of those in power, to correct every abuse which admitted of correction ; and the late decision with respect to the marriage of the Baron de Courcy, was one result of their endeavours. It was not, therefore, without a ray of hope, that he proceeded to Montpellier, and the intelligence he there received from M. de M—, tended greatly to confirm and increase it.

In the course of the examinations which had been made, the affair of the Baron's banishment came also to be canvassed ; a lapse of twenty years had cleared from the minds of men many prejudices that had formerly obscured them ; they soon found reason to believe, not only that it

was a punishment inflicted with needless severity, but that no other grounds had existed for it, excepting the artifices and intrigues of the Prior of St. Roc, who had not scrupled, in this and other instances, to sacrifice his honour and that of his family to his lust of wealth. This fact once established, the sanctity of his character as a churchman was insufficient to shield him from censure, and while surrounded at St. Roc by those who never troubled themselves to form any other standard of right or wrong but his will, at Montpellier a petition was preparing by some who were not accustomed to have their requests disregarded for the recal of the injured Baron, and so complete a restoration of his hereditary honours and estates, as would cover his adversary with confusion. M. de M— was one of its warmest supporters; indeed, without such a success



as the grant of this would insure, it appeared both to him and the Count as if nothing had been done ; and that destitute of money, that powerful engine to which all pretend to be superior, and perhaps none really despise, it would be vain either for the Baron or his son to contest the possession of his lady's fortune. But as some uncertainty of success, of course, remained, they judged it best not to inform Madame Durand of their sanguine hopes, lest a refusal should only serve to overwhelm her with double distress. Alas ! when the assurance that their efforts had succeeded did arrive, it was too late to bring the pleasure they had anticipated. But while her kind friends were thus exerting themselves to complete the work they had so successfully begun, a slow, though certain decline was taking place in Madame Durand's strength ; this was

a time perhaps the most trying to the faith of a Christian, and the lengthened reprieve nourished hopes in those who watched every turn of her disorder, which she herself could never indulge : letters had been sent to the Baron to inform him of the happy result of the trial, and the still more important intelligence of his son's wonderful preservation ; the alarming illness of his sister was also mentioned, to account for Isidore's not instantly flying to his arms ; to these no answer had been received, and day after day Madame Durand experienced the disappointment of the last expectation she suffered herself to indulge—the assurance in his own hand, that her beloved brother was sensible to all the happiness that seemed now to await him. The Count de St. Romain had been prevented by a sudden call to Nismes, from fulfilling his promise of passing

through Vallerargues, and the state of Madame Durand's health would not admit of Isidore's joining him there, notwithstanding his urgent request, in order that they might decide together on that line of conduct it was best for him to pursue with regard to the Prior ; the moment was indeed fast approaching, when he was to lose this invaluable friend, who was to be snatched away while her excellence was only unfolding to his view. After an attack of more than usual severity, she had insisted in a manner not to be refused, on knowing what was the physician's opinion respecting the time of her release, and heard with equal calmness and fortitude, that it was scarcely probable she could linger during the ensuing day. " That is soon," she said, after a short pause, " but if in this state of pain and weakness my peace is not made through

that Redeemer who alone brings peace, of what avail would hours or even years prove? The most momentous event of life, the only one for which, from the first dawn of reason, we should be preparing, is surely enough to occupy the sinking frame, without leaving to that hour what must then be done so imperfectly. I have but one duty, a pleasing duty, that I can now perform, and the solemn warning I have just received, tells me it should not be delayed." She then requested to be removed from the bed, and supported by pillows, was placed so near the open casement, that the cooling breeze of the evening played round her, wafting a thousand sweet odours, and the pale twilight shed its faint gleam on her death-like countenance.

As Rose pointed out to her different spots which they had visited together,

Madame Durand smiled sadly ; there was something so solemn in this last view of that earthly scene, which, degraded and despoiled as it is, still retains so much beauty, that she remained for some time wrapt in silent thought. However strong may be the eye of faith, however vividly we may anticipate the glories of a future state, still we cling to a world which has been the only sphere of our existence, and with which is connected the recollection of all our joys and sorrows. Few and evil may have been the days we have passed upon it, but memory “ lingers o’er the past,” and like the child when first parted from the spot that witnessed its infant sports and tears, turns and returns to take a last fond glimpse. The near approach of that moment, when we must part from the body to which we have been so closely united, strikes us with awe !

It is a feeling at which nature shudders, and to which the meditations we indulge in the bright delusive period of youth and health, bear no more resemblance than the mimic picture to the reality. How merciful is the dispensation that prepares the mind by sickness for this great change, how still more merciful the blessed assurance that the sting is taken away from an enemy who comes upon us with so terrific a frown! It was growing late, and Madame Durand had requested that all her friends would assemble around her. She had before imparted her design to Monsieur and Madame la Porte, and assuring them they might rely on the Baron's consent, to an event which was to contribute to the happiness of so many, prevailed on the former to bless in her presence the union of Isidore and Rose, which she had long so sincerely desired.



When all were present, she called them to her side, and taking a hand of each, “ My children,” she said, “ for such you are in my affections, do not suffer the sadness of this moment to lead you to anticipate a life of mourning ; youth is the season of hope, may yours not be too soon chilled ; but oh remember in your hours of joy that in this world sorrow will also claim its share : few are permitted to tread one even path of peace and security ; our progress is rather like that of the traveller, who, when he arrives at some mountain’s peak, bright in sunshine, knows that he must descend through the region of clouds in order to pursue his road. May the God of Peace be with you in joy and sorrow, and all will be well : He is a stay and a comfort—I have found Him such, and it is He alone who now enables me calmly to leave you,

when to my natural feelings it seems as though I felt more than if the fairest prospect were opening for myself. I leave you to more than fill my place towards my dear brother; you will make him to forget all he has lost; sometimes you will think and speak of me, but let not the recollection awaken gloomy thoughts; in those moments of mutual happiness, when the heart expands with a pleasure independent of outward circumstances, remember one, who would have shared all your pleasures, and who, if it is possible for the disembodied spirit to hover round the objects of its affection, partakes of your delight, and is even then near you. Let love be the rule of your life—love to God and man; it was not in vain that we are told it is the fulfilling of the law, for without it in what are we superior to the creatures that perform their Maker's will by

the force of all-powerful instinct? Oh' what a God, my children, is ours, who permits us to love him, who commands us to put away the idols that degrade our homage, and to rise to that state of blessedness from which fallen man had been excluded but for the merits of his Redeemer! A death-bed is not the professor's seat, from whence we can prove with scientific skill the folly of those who do not embrace truths so clearly stated, but it gives the privilege of declaring, with an authority which none in the pride of life and vigour of health can possess, their *madness* in rejecting so much mercy ; on such a theme the faltering tongue is more eloquent than the finished orator. Yes, O Lord! thou art truth, and all thy promises are sure ; I have heard it with the ear, but *now* alone doth mine eye truly see it." Then pausing a short time to

recover strength, she drew a ring from her own finger, and giving it to Isidore, desired him to place it on Rose's; she herself put the myrtle crown on her head, and beckoning La Porte to approach, with the solemnity which such an awful moment rendered doubly affecting, he pronounced the words that were irrevocably to unite his children in weal and woe, for time and for eternity! It was a striking scene to witness, thus drawn near together, the close and commencement of life; the pale cheek of her who was sinking into the arms of death kindling into a momentary smile of more than earthly joy at beholding the completion of her wishes, and the youthful beauty of those who had pronounced the vows which seem, if ever mortal accents can, to announce the commencement of a happy existence, bathed with tears of sorrow.

La Porte contented himself with simply performing the ceremony ; it was not a time for exhortation ; the heart that was insensible to the preaching of that hour would have indeed turned away from the voice of the “ charmer, charm he never so wisely.” Exhausted by her exertions, Madame Durand was carried back to her bed ; during the remainder of that night she appeared much engaged in secret prayer, which was only interrupted by the frequent returns of oppressed breathing, that seemed as if they would every minute put an end to her sufferings. From time to time the voice of the pastor was heard ; his accents trembling from agitation in the midst of the dead silence that reigned around, uttering such pious ejaculations and passages of sacred writ, as might prepare and comfort the dying saint in the approaching conflict. It

sounded like that of a guardian angel, descending, as imagination will sometimes fondly picture, to strengthen those who are passing through the dark valley and the deep flood. Towards morning her breathing seemed easier, and she requested that such prayers might be read as are appointed by the forms of her church for the dying. All present joined in the solemn service, and as La Porte pronounced the benediction which she was never again to hear from mortal lips, the first beams of the sun broke into the apartment. Madame Durand immediately asked Rose, who was kneeling beside her, What day it was? and on being told it was Sunday, replied, “ After how short a week of trouble does my eternal sabbath begin! Raise me a little higher, my child, and sing the hundred and forty-sixth Psalm: disturb me not till it is ended;



I am so happy, I could almost fancy I already heard the strains of heaven." They began in a low tone that sublime hymn of praise. It seemed to each anxious eye that her face grew paler, and her respiration easier, but they thought it was from the blaze of light that now streamed full upon the bed. When they had concluded, Madame la Porte drawing near, placed her hand upon her forehead, and felt that the coldness of death was there ; the form before them was now only lifeless clay ; that spirit of love, peace, and joy, had already flown to those eternal mansions for which it had been so long preparing !

---

## CHAPTER XII.

---

For the past sufferings of this noble race,  
(Since things once past, and fled out of thine hand,  
Hearken no more to thy command,)  
Let present joys fill up their place,  
And with oblivion's silent stroke deface  
Of foregone ills the very trace.

*Cowley's second Ode of Pindar.*

---

It would be idle to attempt describing the grief of all those who had lost in Madame Durand a friend whom they knew it would be difficult to replace. With that fond devotion, which holds as sacred the slightest wish expressed by those who are for ever torn from us, they remembered her having frequently expressed a desire to be interred in the little chapel of St. Mary, where the remains of her sister re-

posed, and determined to overcome every obstacle in the fulfilment of it. As the Protestants were then allowed no separate place of sepulture, it was the constant custom amongst them—a custom which is even now not wholly abolished—to confide the ashes of those over whom they mourned, to the secure asylum of their own habitations, and many, on hearing of Madame Durand's death, were ready, like the Matron of Megara, to uncover their hearths and receive the sacred deposit ; but there was a sad pleasure in executing even the faintest intimations of her wishes, notwithstanding the well-grounded apprehensions of interference from the Prior, as the chapel stood in the midst of the park to which he laid claim. In order, as far as possible, to prevent opposition, the precise period fixed for the funeral was kept as secret as the

nature of such an affair would permit, and the time chosen for its performance, that dead hour of night, when it was hoped all who did not "wake to weep," would be sunk in profound repose. In Lebrun, and Andore, and Gaspard, who were not yet returned to their homes, Isidore found sufficient assistance, without seeing himself forced to have recourse to strangers, and attended by La Porte and Monsieur Brunel, who had returned a short time since from Montpellier, they set out on their pious design. The humble procession reached unmolested the ruined chapel, and it was only then, that lighting a feeble taper, they ventured to dispel the darkness in which they had cautiously proceeded, and to break the silence which had hitherto been only interrupted by the heavy footsteps of the bearers. Their appearance indeed was rather that of a

band, who, in the terrors of a guilty conscience, were snatching an unhallowed grave for some victim of their violence, than of mourners over the ashes of one whom all the world might have been proud to honour: the utmost haste marked every moment, and scarcely could the whispered prayer be heard which was to solemnize this awful moment. But they were not destined to proceed without interference. Before the coffin was lowered into the grave, a stranger rushed into the chapel with every appearance of agitation; regardless of the cries of the assistants he threw himself beside it, and pressing his lips to the insensible wood, sobbed aloud as if his heart were full almost to bursting. He was followed by a troop of men from the village, eager and clamorous in their curiosity, and the dim light of the solitary taper was in a moment lost in the blaze of

torches and lanterns which flashed so vividly against the mouldering walls, that the ivy-covered arches and carved windows were crimsoned with the glare. Shocked and astonished at the unwelcome and unexpected intrusion, Isidore was about to remonstrate with the spectators, several of whom he recognised as retainers of the Prior's, when one man, with more audacity than the rest, insisted it was rather he and his companions should leave that place, where their presence was as unwelcome as it was illegal, since they were on the Prior's ground, who was not a man to permit that to be done without his consent, to which no human power could ever have obtained it. Isidore stood for a moment uncertain how to proceed; he could have expected no other behaviour, and he well knew to what extremities his antagonist might be



carried, but this he was determined at present to disregard, and to abide the consequences at a future moment. Throwing himself before the ruffians who were advancing to seize the coffin, he protested that if they stirred one step it should be at the risk of their own lives, or the expense of his, for no indignity should be offered to those remains while he had power to defend them. The men paused, but his remonstrance served only to confirm their resolution ; the Prior, they said, was lord of that spot, and no heretic dust should pollute his premises ; they did not wish to proceed to violence, but must do their duty, and advised the young man to refrain from persevering in his resolution, or he might incur a penalty which he seemed little to expect. Isidore was equally resolved not to give way, and not only the countenances of his friends

showed no intention of yielding to force, but several of the crowd warmly took his part, and declared they would not suffer such an outrage to be committed in their presence. In the midst of this scene of confusion, which every moment became more violent, the grief of the stranger had been entirely disregarded ; but, as if suddenly aroused by the tumult and loud altercation around him, he now rose from beside the grave, and putting aside with a powerful arm those who crowded the nearest to it, stood forth as if the arbiter of the difference. He was a man of noble presence, touched but not bent by the effects of years ; his dark hair sprinkled with the snows of age, and his eye dimmed with the anguish which he sought rather to repress than indulge ; still there was something so commanding in his whole appearance, that all were silent,

and though unconscious of his claims to a hearing, seemed to await his decision with submission. “ Your efforts are not only disgraceful but misplaced,” he at length exclaimed in a faltering voice ; “ but it is from ignorance that you act, and you are therefore less deserving of censure ; go tell your proud employer that the Baron de Courcy is returned to assert his rights and reclaim his inheritance, and that he would not even accept these privileges, if they could not enable him to secure from pollution the ashes of her whom a feeling for his sufferings alone has brought low.” The crowd fell back still further, though half doubting whether their ears did not deceive them. Monsieur Brunel, who in the tone of voice more even than in the care-worn features of the stranger, had recognised his beloved pupil, pressed forward to seize his

hand, and Isidore, throwing himself into his arms, " My father ! " " My son ! " was all that the overpowering feelings of that moment would permit them to utter. " And is it really the Baron ? and how came he to venture back again ? " was whispered eagerly around. This none present could resolve ; the servants of the Count de St. Romain, who had followed with idle curiosity those whom they saw running to the chapel, only knew that he had alighted at their master's hotel at Nismes, and after a few moment's conversation with him, they had been ordered to convey the Baron with all the rapidity four pampered steeds could exert to Vallerargues, where the noise of an arrival at such an hour had drawn a great part of the inhabitants from their beds, many of whom had followed his almost distracted steps, when, having learnt from Madame La Porte that he was

arrived too late, and the last duties were even then rendering to a sister he so highly valued, he had hurried on to be present at the ceremony ; but of the security he enjoyed in thus revisiting his native land, they were utterly ignorant.

While these imperfect explanations were giving and receiving, the Baron, recovering from the first effects of his emotion, had turned to receive the welcome and the blessings of the venerable Monsieur Brunel, and La Porte, exerting his influence with the peasants, and convincing the men who were intending to render this service to the Prior, that by proceeding in their design they would probably only involve him in serious difficulties, they at length consented to retire, and permitted the assistants to conclude their task without further molestation. But no sooner were they left alone, than the Baron

losing all the assumed firmness which just before had animated him, turned again to the grave, and in a tone scarcely audible, said ; “ It is at the moment when all other human consolation is taken from me, my son, that I here receive you ; it is by the cold remains of her who assured me in her latest days that you would be my comfort, that I first hear myself addressed by the name of father ! and she is deaf to our expressions of affection ! she can listen neither to my regrets nor to my thankfulness ! She who shared in all the pleasures of childhood, and the sorrows of riper years, why is she taken away, when old age begins to press heavily upon me ? but the will of Heaven be done ; she is gone to rejoice with your sainted mother, and we, my son, are left to follow their steps, and to live as if they were still present with us.” He then knelt



down beside the rising mound, and those present repeated in silence the grief which found no relief but in this solemn act of devotion. When all was ended, Isidore drew his father from the melancholy spot, and accompanied him to the house which Madame Durand had occupied, as he had expressed a desire to pass the remaining hours of that night without being intruded upon. There was indeed much to be learnt by two persons so closely allied, and yet so long parted. The perfect confidence which both desired equally to feel and to express, was at first checked by a feeling of strangeness that circumstances had created in their bosoms, but where the characters and inclinations are in unison, this must soon wear off, and before morning, each felt the happiness of being able to strengthen by inclination the ties of nature. Isidore's first care had

been to prepossess his father in favour of Rose, and he allowed no time to elapse before making them personally acquainted.

Early, therefore, on the ensuing day, they repaired to the Pastor's house. Madame la Porte was waiting to receive them, with all that anxiety which mothers alone can feel, and which far exceeds what the most fearful experience when their own happiness only is at stake. With a beating heart Rose descended, leaning on Isidore's arm; while in the pride of love he presented his pale, yet lovely bride, to a father who was already so well prepared to approve his choice. The Baron, though he could not so quickly shake off the gloom that oppressed him, showed, at the same time, it was as his child he received her, before whom it was not necessary to conceal his feelings; he

was irresistibly drawn to one on whom the happiness of his son was henceforth to depend, and who had been the object of so much of his lamented sister's affection, and there was a look of mild entreaty in Rose's expressive countenance, that would have softened towards her, one even less prepared to judge favourably.

The intelligence of the scene which had taken place at the funeral, and of the Baron de Courcy's return, reached the Priory before the morning's dawn: in the first paroxysm of the Prior's rage, he was tempted instantly to order the arrest of the Baron, to seize upon Isidore, and make all their aiders and abettors feel the effects of his anger; but in the course of the day, a letter from the Count de St. Romain, rather cooled this fiery zeal. In this he so clearly and convincingly stated, how freely the government had restored

to the Baron all that he had lost through his machinations, that the Prior, finding the tide run strongly against him, and deprived at one blow of so much of his reputation and property, saw himself unable to retain that which had belonged to the Baroness, and was reluctantly compelled to relinquish his schemes. Indeed, he would have found it dangerous to stand out against the torrent of popular feeling; no sooner was it known that their ancient lord was returned, than the majority of the inhabitants of Vallerargues, rendered bold by their joy, proceeded to destroy every mark of their subjection to the Prior, and disclaiming a servitude they had always loathed, refused to acknowledge any other superior than he whom the law now restored to them. Bonfires blazed in every corner of the village, all labour was suspended, and the shouts

and rejoicings that burst forth with a fervour, nothing could repress, re-echoed even as far as the Priory walls. There, enclosed with his servile dependants, the Prior spent his hours in execrating the perverseness of his fate, and planning un-availing delays. With the loss of his revenues, he felt his consequence must diminish, and determined, by an exchange of his benefice, to deprive those whom he had oppressed of the pleasure of triumphing over him in his disappointment. What were the feelings of mortified ambition and unsatisfied avarice, which followed him to the new scenes he sought, may be easily imagined ; they were the only punishment that the Baron judged it necessary he should meet with. In the mean time, the latter removed with his children, Monsieur Brunel and Louise, to pass the period of their mourning, far from

a spot which not only continually recalled to mind what they had lost, but where the eagerness of their well-wishers and the petitions of their numerous dependants left them no leisure for that unconstrained intercourse which they so earnestly desired.

During their absence, all the formalities necessary for the legal restoration of the forfeited estates, and the acknowledgment of Isidore's birth, were concluded by the activity of the Count and M. de M—, and the castle was prepared for their reception, under the superintendence of Monsieur and Madame la Porte, assisted by Lebrun. Madame la Porte was most pardonably anxious to see her only child speedily installed in the honours to which she was raised, nor was Leah Coste, with a kind forgetfulness of all past injuries, wanting in her hints and directions, the



result of her great experience in matters of taste, and which, if not implicitly followed, were at least listened to in silence. The only request that Rose made, was for the preservation of the picture representing Laura and her sister, which was, by her especial desire, transferred to her dressing-room.

Before the whole was completed, autumn had drawn his chilling hand over the lovely scenery of that romantic country ; the vintage, that labour which alone of all the various toils to which man is ordained, he welcomes as a source of pleasure, was already begun over the whole country ; from every side resounded the joyful songs of the merry troops who were employed in cutting the rich branches of grapes, or leading the waggons that carried the precious load to the overflowing presses. The sturdy mountaineers,

scarcely bending under the weight of fruit which they bore, rent the air with their wild songs and peals of laughter, and their strains were echoed by the treaders dancing on the pliant boards from which the blood-red juice streamed in torrents around; even the children, released from their accustomed confinement, under the eye of a severe pedagogue, ran with delight to the vineyards, to join in the favourite task. Nor were the fatigues of the day sufficient to damp the spirits, or tire the limbs of these lovers of mirth. No sooner was the last load each evening arrived in safety, than the young girls threw off their soiled garments, the young men assembled round the hautboy, and the moon, in her mild splendour, witnessed for hours, their lengthened revelry and mirth.

It was on such a night that the Baron

de Courcy's carriage, in which he and his family were returning to their home, their father's home, drove along the same road, over which, but a few months before, Madame Durand had passed, unheeded in her humble equipage ; not so the Baron, as the carriage whirled along, the crowds forsook the dance, young and old men and women, headed by the zealous Simon Chas, all toiled up the steep that led to the castle gates, and when it passed into the spacious court, such a shout rent the air, as made the old towers shake to their very base. The Baron and his friends immediately appeared on the balcony that overlooked the Court ; he could only bow his thanks, for his heart was too full for utterance. He ordered instantly that all comers should be entertained with the best the castle could afford, and the people again shouted, to think that the ancient

hospitality to which those walls had long been strangers, was about to recommence. Though the night was almost past before the different parties were satisfied with seeing, and speaking to their much loved lord, he could not retire to rest, without accompanying Isidore and Rose to the chapel of St. Mary, where, by his direction, a plain sarcophagus of white marble had been erected, and a simple inscription told the passer by who slept below. There they mingled their tears with those feelings of gratitude which the blessings they were now called upon to enjoy, so warmly excited, and there they confessed, not only that the ways of providence are inscrutable to man, and often when in appearance darkest, are tracing out the line of happiness he is to tread, but that in this world, those most favoured are purified by affliction, and that since it

frequently appears that one event happeneth to the evil and to the good, there must be another and a better world where the justice as well as mercy of the Almighty shall be vindicated.

THE END.

---

LONDON:

Printed by WILLIAM CLOWES, Northumberland-court.













UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS-URBANA



3 0112 041697993